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Educators' perceptions of the implementation process of a social skills/violence prevention curriculum: A qualitative study

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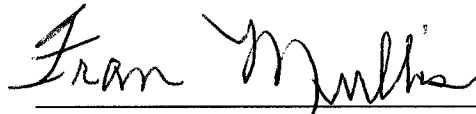
ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF A SOCIAL SKILLS/VIOLENCE PREVENTION CURRICULUM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY, by Kim A. Hall, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

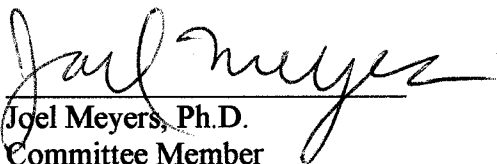
The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.



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ABSTRACT

EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF A SOCIAL SKILLS/VIOLENCE PREVENTION CURRICULUM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by
Kim A. Hall

Dropout rates, acts of aggression, depressed youth, and underachievement are difficulties schools are trying to alleviate (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2002; Reynolds, as cited in Dalley, 1993; Kessler, as cited in Neal, 2003; Poli et al., 2003). Because of these challenges, schools are seeking positive change that can address these issues. Researchers have found that successful solutions to these problems are multi-dimensional and comprehensive in approach (Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003; Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer & Perry, 2003). Such components as classroom meetings and social skills/problem solving skills training are important contributors to a comprehensive approach (Edwards & Mullis, 2004; Peterson, Pietrzak, & Speaker, 2004; Arriaza, 2004). This qualitative study consisted of 9 educators interviewed for the purpose of gathering their perceptions about the implementation process of *Second Step* at their 2 schools. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes each. The results found 8 interacting themes that affect the implementation process. These themes are: rationale, staff training, teacher ownership, teacher characteristics, administrative support, simultaneous changes, staff relationships, and time. Using Chen's conceptual model of the implementation process, these themes fall into 3 domains (Chen, 1998). These domains are: Implementation System, Characteristics of the Implementer, and Setting

Characteristics. In general, I found that in order to increase one's chance of successful implementation of a social skills/violence prevention curriculum, these things need to be considered: 1) timing of the implementation, 2) administrative support available, 3) supportive peer staff training, 4) collaboration between program coordinators, and 5) regularly planned staff-bonding activities to encourage trust and cooperation.

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OF A SOCIAL SKILLS/VIOLENCE
PREVENTION CURRICULUM:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by
Kim A. Hall

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CHAPTER 1

IMPLEMENTING A SOCIAL SKILLS/VIOLENCE PREVENTION CURRICULUM: A COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT TASK

INTRODUCTION

Students need a repertoire of social skills and problem solving skills to be successful students and successful citizens. Many students come to school with these skills lacking, and are not likely to see them modeled in their homes. Dropout rates, acts of aggression and violence, the number of depressed and suicidal youth in schools, and underachievement of students in American schools are indicators that these skills are lacking.

The U.S. Department of Education's Digest of Education Statistics (2002) reports in the 2001 Common Core of Data Local Education Agency Universe Survey the dropout rates for the nation. The rates range from 2.7% (Wisconsin) to 10.9% (Arizona), with Georgia having a 7.2% dropout rate for the school year 2000-2001. Also reported is how safe students feel going to school nationwide, with 5.0% of white, 9.8% of black, and 10.2% of Hispanic students feeling unsafe. In addition, as many as 14 - 25% of children and adolescents qualify for clinical depression (Reynolds, as cited in Dalley, 1992; Kessler, as cited in Neal, 2003; Poli, Sbrana, Marcheschi, & Masi, 2003).

With these alarming numbers, it is clear that schools need to address these concerns. Encouraging youth to want to stay in school and to believe academic success is

possible; promoting caring and engaging relationships between peers, and between teachers and students; discouraging the acceptance of violence and bullying; and teaching social-emotional skills and problem solving skills students need to be successful in their careers and personal lives are some of the steps schools could take to address the above mentioned concerns. Implementing these programs is a complex phenomena that requires an in-depth understanding of the implementation process in order to be successfully sustained.

Researchers have found that solutions to the above problems are multi-dimensional and comprehensive (Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003; Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Perry, 2003). Solutions that focus on one component only are not as likely to be as successful as a comprehensive approach. Efforts that include all components of a student's school experience will support and overlap with each other. Such components as classroom meetings, social skills/violence prevention training, appropriate and challenging academic material, connections with the community, and parental involvement all contribute to students being successful in school (Arriaza, 2004; Edwards & Mullis, 2004; Petersen, Pietrzak, & Speaker, 1998). This paper examines one of these components, the implementation of a social skills/violence prevention curriculum.

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to address the complex issue of implementing a social skills/violence prevention curriculum in a school system. Social-emotional learning has received increased attention in recent years as an important goal of education and as an essential component of how children learn. It has also been shown to be a factor in the

prevention of violence in schools while, simultaneously, promoting the academic success of students (Aber, Brown, Roderick, & Lantieri, 2001; Ragozzino, Resnik, Utne-O'Brien, & Weissberg, 2003). Even though empirical evidence points to the value of social skills/violence prevention training, it is difficult for schools to implement such a curriculum given the stressors that are continually being placed on educational systems. Some of the stressors that discourage teachers from taking the time to incorporate such training in their weekly repertoire of activities are: the emphasis on testing and teacher accountability, the number of children in the classroom who have severe behavior problems, and the difficulties that come with teaching a large number of children living in poverty. Therefore, this paper will discuss the complex issues of implementing a social skills/violence prevention curriculum in order to increase the likelihood of sustained implementation. This also would apply to any school change.

As a school counselor who participated with a major southeastern university, in the implementation and sustaining of a social-emotional learning program starting in 1998, much has been learned about the process of implementation and school change. Many factors appear to play important roles in school change. Some of these factors are supporting organizational structures, rationale for change, staff relationships, financial resources, staff development, program coordinators, and flexibility in implementation (Adelman, 2002; Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Coburn, 2003; Domitrovich & Greenberg, 2002; Fullan, 2002; Grimes & Tilly III, 1996; Hargreaves & Fink, 2000; Herr, 2002; Klingner, Ahwee, Pilonieta, & Menendez, 2003; Laguardia, Brink, Wheeler, Grisham, & Peck, 2002; Marsh, 1996; Pritchard & Marshall, 2002; Taylor, Nelson, & Adelman, 1999; Weidemann & Humphrey, 2002).

Michael Fullan (2001) presents a model of the implementation process once an adoption of change has been initiated. This model is based upon research that characterizes implementation within the change process (Berman, as cited in Fullan, 2001; Clark, Dotto, & Astuto, as cited in Fullan, 2001; Cohen, 1998; Firestone, Bader, and Massel, 1992; Huberman & Miles, as cited in Fullan, 2001; Louis & Miles, as cited in Fullan, 2001). He claims that the processes beyond adoption are more intricate than the initiated decisions of change on paper, because they involve more people, and because real change depends on what people do. What people do and do not do are the crucial variables of implementation.

According to Fullan (2001), this process of implementation is affected by several factors. These factors can be divided into three separate, yet interactive categories: characteristics of change, local characteristics, and external factors. *Characteristics of change* include: (a) need for the change, (b) clarity about the goals and means of change, (c) complexity of the difficulty of change required by the individuals responsible for implementation, and (d) quality and practicality of the program. *Local characteristics* include: (a) school district's ability to manage the change, (b) community's and school board's ability to support the change, (c) the principal's support of the change, and (d) teacher's traits in implementing the change. The last category, *external factors*, consists of government and other agencies such as the Department of Education.

Factors Affecting Implementation

Organizational Structures

Structural issues and management procedures, such as support from administrators and the district office greatly affect the implementation process of a social

skills/violence prevention curriculum as it transitions from implementation in one classroom to an entire school, and from one school to several schools or an entire district. Administrators including implementation efforts on faculty meeting agendas or on staff training day agendas speaks volumes. Being included in the district budget by the superintendent is also a structural step that carries weight. Principals requiring documentation of teacher implementation of the curriculum stresses its importance. These efforts are of particular importance in implementing a social-emotional learning curriculum due to the emphasis currently being put on academic achievement and test results. Without support from the head decision makers, teachers and principals are likely to believe it is really not that important. This would be included in the category, local characteristics, mentioned by Fullan's model above (i.e. teacher characteristics and principal support).

Elias et al., (2003), when working with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), and in the review of implementation literature, discovered several barriers to the implementation process. These barriers include: structural features, (i.e. no time for shared collaboration among the staff), a narrow mindset about the implementation process (i.e. programs and packages), poor time and resource management (i.e. daily schedule did not allow for the implementation, and money was not set aside for additional material needs), and characteristics of adults involved (i.e. a closed mindset about facilitating students' social-emotional growth). Organizational support structures such as these send a direct and an indirect message to teachers about the importance of implementing the curriculum.

When studying state accountability for the North Carolina legislature, Ponder and Ware (2003) discovered that structural changes in schools usually precede deeper changes. In and of themselves, these structural changes, such as those mentioned above, are not enough to produce achievement results. Tobergte and Curtis (2002), through experience, research, and observation of successful schools, propose that school changes involve, among other things, building support structures that lead to lasting school change. They state that support structures need to be in place to meet the needs of schools. Examples of these support structures are sustained professional development, administrative support (i.e. creating time during the school day for staff to collaborate), and financial resources. Structural changes such as being put on staff training day agendas, and being mentioned by the principal and assistant principal over the intercom and in student support team meetings in regard to student behavior were a few of the supports this author experienced. Allowing the reassignment of duties (i.e. assistant principal volunteered to coordinate student support team meetings instead of this author) had a major influence on the amount of time this author had to encourage and train others in the implementation of the curriculum.

Research suggests that schools that attend to the social emotional needs of the students by listening to their needs and helping them to problem solve, had the most success with a science curriculum reform (Weinburgh, 2003). These schools were described as having teachers who showed they cared about their students, in conjunction with being firm, but loving and nurturing. Support structures, such as those mentioned earlier, of building-level administrators (principals) were more important than the district-level administrators in affecting the reform. Principal support affected the degree

to which the implementation process was carried out at each of the seven schools researched. This is also true according to this author's experience in implementing the social skills/violence prevention curriculum in her district. Funding to support this curriculum was obtained from a grant (Children's Trust Fund Commission), and required signatures of support from the principals at each school and from the superintendent. Even though the superintendent signed the contract and applauded the importance of the curriculum, the building-level administrators (principals) at each of the 6 schools support it on a different level. The amount of implementation that actually exists in each school has been dependant on how the principal has supported its use.

In addition, personnel such as grant coordinators, who are responsible for seeing that grant stipulations are followed, lest monies have to be repaid due to noncompliance of the grant contract, offer another valuable, organizational structural resource in the implementation process. Reminding principals and staff that grant money must be paid back to the grantor if grant agreements are not kept, can be an impetus to continue the chosen effort. Again, this author experienced something similar when those responsible for coordinating the implementation of the social skills/violence prevention curriculum at their school (i.e. counselors) disclosed in a meeting that some were in compliance, and some were not. When this was shared with the grant coordinator, she became immediately alarmed, and explained the necessity of paying back to grantors monies that were given to the school system to support the implementation of the curriculum.

Rationale for Change

An increasing number of children bring to school troubling behaviors they have learned at home. Many experience chaotic home environments where family dysfunction

and violence are the norm. Many are neglected and ill prepared to participate in classroom education and learning. Teachers frequently experience difficulty in actual teaching due to the acting out of students. Disruptive behavior, such as yelling, shoving, pushing, ignoring teacher directives, threatening others, fighting, and cursing interfere with instruction and limit the learning of all students. Well- publicized violent acts against peers and school staff (i.e. Columbine High School in Colorado, Heritage High School in Georgia) demonstrate the extreme end of this disruptive behavior. Teachers find themselves spending more and more time trying to control impulsive, angry, oppositional students (Peterson, Pietrzak, & Speaker, 1998). They feel discouraged when they cannot teach the students who are ready and willing to learn (Elias et al., 2003). They feel unappreciated and misunderstood when state and federal legislatures complain about student test scores, and an increasing number of teachers are dropping out of teaching (Hargrove, Walker, Huber, Corrigan, & Moore, 2004). If students are to learn more beneficial ways of interacting with one another and with their teachers, then their social-emotional learning cannot be overlooked.

Helping teachers and other school personnel to understand the benefit of a social emotional learning program (i.e. Second Step curriculum, classroom meetings,) in responding to and preventing behavior problems in their class is challenging, yet a necessity if change is to happen. Fullan (2001) includes “need for change” as one of the characteristics of change in his interactive model. He further states that “many innovations are attempted without a careful examination of whether or not they address what are perceived to be priority needs” (p.69). When this is the case, change is much more difficult. On the surface, it may appear easier and less time consuming to deal with

the immediate emergency (i.e. acting-out student) rather than to learn new intervention and prevention methods that require an initial investment of time, money, and energy to be effective. Frequently, schools choose services to intervene with disruptive behavior that have not been research-based. According to Satcher (2001), less than 10 percent of services delivered in schools and communities targeting antisocial behavior patterns in youth are evidence-based. If these attempts at improving student behavior are not successful, then teachers and administrators could become discouraged. This could further discourage the mindset of teachers and administrators from wanting to implement a social skills/violence prevention curriculum. By participating in evidence-based social emotional curricula and local research, much could be gained.

Walker, Ramsey, and Gresham (2003), in discussing evidence-based ways to prevent and intervene with anti-social behavior, recommend, among other things, teaching good behavior to students. Their research suggests that it is essential that young children possess social skills that will allow them to cooperate, share, negotiate difficulties, and gain acceptance of peers in order to learn, be successful in school, and to avoid trouble in school and with the law. Spence (2003) also conducted research that suggests social skills training, as part of a multi-method approach, can be effective in producing significant and lasting change. Kazdin's (1993) research suggests that without someone intervening early to teach children how to behave better, half of them will maintain behavioral difficulties during their adult lives.

Ignoring social-emotional learning in children and its' relationship to academic learning has a cost. When children acquire social skills and problem solving skills, they become more resilient against depression, truancy, bullying, eating disorders, and

dropping out of school. Teaching an effective social skills curriculum, such as *Second Step*, can provide students with the tools to deal with the pressures of life. This can be particularly important for children who come from family environments where parents or caregivers lack the social emotional skills needed to promote pro social skills in their children (Goleman, 1997). When children possess social emotional competence, they are less likely to be aggressive, and more likely to participate in peaceful interactions in the classroom, thereby, allowing the teacher to teach and the students to learn (Bender, Shubert, & McLaughlin, 2001; Browning, Davis, & Resta, 2000; Edwards & Mullis, 2004; Frey & Doyle, 2001; Grossman et al., 1997; Landau, & Gathercoal, 2000).

Tobergte and Curtis (2002) ascertain that schools cannot move forward until they see the need. Understanding the need for change is one of the five behaviors to school improvement that is based on Tobergte and Curtis' model. Educational systems are designed to do what has always been done, and until the stakeholders understand the need for change, then change is unlikely.

Staff Relationships

“Local characteristics” mentioned by Fullan’s interactive model include teachers. Collegiality, open communication, trust, support and help, learning on the job, getting results, job satisfaction and morale are closely related to the level of implementation experienced. Work environments that are “learning enriched” stimulate continuous improvement, according to Fullan (2001).

According to Tobergte and Curtis, (2002) one key ingredient that is often overlooked in school change is the importance of building relationships among staff members. The staff must know each other, understand the school culture within which

they work, and participate in encouraging interactions that lead to a positive learning environment. Opportunities for open communication of ideas, as well as concerns, must be provided to encourage an environment of trust and respect. Tobergte and Curtis state that change starts at every school site and is a process, that it begins with relationships built upon trust, time spent together, respect for one another, and a passion for each child.

Relationships between school staff appear to have a definite effect on successful school change – that is, on the extent of its implementation. Such issues as trust arise as possible problem areas. Datnow and Sutherland (2002), conducted research on comprehensive school reform, and found that conflict among old and new staff could cause difficulties and affect the school climate. They also discovered that when trust was absent, there was defensiveness toward other teachers visiting their classrooms to learn and share in their knowledge. Veteran staff members were seen as especially resistant to change. This could be due to the fact that there had been three principals in the last five years, and a number of veteran staff did not support the current principal. Another important factor Datnow and Sutherland discovered was the importance of teachers feeling they were consulted during the change process, and feeling that the process was collaboration between them and the administrators.

Ruby (2002) describes the situation of a teacher changing the subject he or she teaches from one year to the next as internal teacher turnover. It was discovered that internal teacher turnover affected the amount of trust between teachers, and also affected their relationship with the person facilitating the reform effort. Some teachers had to teach subjects they had never taught, and this affected their relationship with the person

they saw as causing this event. As teachers began to see how the reform effort was beneficial, trust appeared to increase. This, then, could affect the implementation process.

In a 10-year intensive case study and longitudinal statistical analyses of more than 400 Chicago elementary schools, relational trust was found to be essential in building effective educational communities (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). To gather information, this study used observation of school meetings and events, interviews and focus groups with administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders, observation of classroom instruction, and discussions with teachers about progress and problems of reform efforts.

Strahan (2003) investigated various studies of school reform and discovered the importance of teacher relationships. Collective efficacy, the extent to which teachers believe they can work together for the achievement of their students, was one of the findings reported. One of the factors associated with successful, enduring implementation of evidence-based prevention/social emotional learning programs is the involvement of individuals who share high morale, good communication, and a sense of ownership (Elias et al., 2003). Barth (1990) emphasized that he had found no characteristic of a good school more pervasive than a healthy teacher-principal relationship. He believed that the teacher-principal relationship set the tone for all other interactions within the school. Comer et al., (1996) listed relationships as a reoccurring factor when discussing the themes that arose from his research with the “Comer Process” for reforming education. Comer reported schools maintained that their transformations began when building relationships began to gel. He further stated that the importance of cohesive relationships to reform efforts expanded to community relationships. He believed that strong relationships take time, work, and energy, but, in the end benefit everyone.

Financial Resources

The importance of financial support cannot be overlooked. Government agencies have become increasingly aware of the importance of allocating resources to assist with implementation. Such resources provide the margin required for many school districts to implement a change successfully and fully. Innovative programs all require materials, consultation, and staff development. Outside agencies (i.e. grant resources) can provide assistance or stimulate implementation, provided the assistance is integrated with the factors at the local district level. Government and outside agency support is included in Fullan's interactive model under "external factors" (Fullan, 2001).

Weidemann and Humphrey (2002), investigated the empowerment of teachers in reforming math instruction and discovered that the lack of needed supplies affected implementation. Project directors contacted regional state alliances to help provide the needed supplies. Key school and system players who are knowledgeable about where to locate funding can be helpful. Funding from public and private grant sources would be beneficial. Eventually, having the reform effort as a line-item in the school budget would validate its necessity and encourage its implementation.

When Gendin and Sergeev (2002) surveyed teachers, parents, and upper-grade students in the problems of school reform in 1998, a lack of supportive financial resources was listed by teachers. Seventy-three percent of teachers listed "the inadequate financing and material support for the schools" as being a major problem. (p.8) Lack of financial support is also cited frequently as an impediment to school reform in the United States (Elias, Bruene-Butler, Blum, & Schuyler, 2000; Gendin & Sergeev, 2002;

Laguardia, Brink, Wheeler, Grisham, & Peck, 2002; Phillips, 2003; Weidemann & Humphrey, 2002).

Many funding sources were tapped for the social emotional learning program with which this author is involved. The financial resources evolved as peers, a major southeastern university, and community agencies claimed an interest in the reform effort. Originally, a few of the curriculum kits (*Second Step*) were purchased through a grant from the “Teaching Tolerance” organization supported by the Southern Poverty Law Center. A state initiation grant conjointly written by a major southeastern university and this author funded enough curriculum kits for the original school site implementation. At a later date, another grant supported by the Children’s Trust Fund Commission (a state granting agency), in conjunction with Georgia Healthcare Foundation – accessed via community contacts, provided the funding for the whole district. The collaboration with the university enhanced the integrity and expertise of these funding efforts.

Tobergte and Curtis (2002), in discussing their five behavior model for school improvement (i.e. building relationships, recognizing the need for change, understanding change, building support structures, and creating a new focus) list financial resources as a component of support structures. Without sufficient financial support, teachers are not empowered to make the needed changes.

It has been said that how people spend their time and money is an excellent indicator of what is important to them. This could also be said about the legislative system in America. Mark Kennedy (2002), who interviewed Jay Masters, an inmate at Quentin State Prison, worked with inner city students for 13 years, and endured the shame and blame that is leveled on educators by the media, politicians, and test watchers,

asserts that it's past time for America to show that it is concerned for its children. One major way of doing that would be to put money into education that would support holistic reform for our schools, not just one-dimensional reform. Using Jay Masters' life experience as an example, Kennedy asks how academic standards would help children who have similar experiences of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; and who live in homes of poverty and addiction, without insurance, without adult supervision, and without support in their educational lives. Kennedy argues that it is past time for America to put money into programs that would transform the educational system, not just reform it. He contests that money should be spent on the whole child, not just on academic learning.

Staff Development

Every reform effort requires staff development. It is essential that teachers and others involved in a system wide implementation effort be prepared and have the skills they need to be successful. Under Fullan's interactive model, staff development is considered one of the key themes in the implementation process. He states that change, by its nature, requires learning new ways of thinking and doing, new skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Staff development is required to accomplish the above. Staff development is also mentioned by Fullan as one of the key factors affecting implementation. It is included in *local characteristics* of the school or school district, and in *external factors* affecting the change. The factor *local characteristics* would include the belief in and participation in collaboration with other staff members. Staff development is encouraged by allowing teachers to observe, plan with, and evaluate one another. By *external factors*, Fullan is referring to governmental or other agency influences that assist with

implementation. For example, *external factors* includes financial resources or staff resources provided to the school district to assist with staff development.

In Showers, Joyce and Bennett's synthesis of research on staff development in nearly 200 studies (1987), beneficial information was learned. It was discovered that what the teacher thinks about teaching determines what they do; it is not enough for teachers to just "go through the motions" of staff training. It is necessary to include theory, new strategy demonstration, practice, and prompt feedback for training to be effective. In addition, coaching encourages teachers to keep trying. Competent teachers with high self-esteem appear to benefit more. Flexibility in thinking is an asset for teachers, and teaching styles and value orientations don't appear to have a great affect on staff development. Other findings were: there must be a basic level of knowledge or skill in a new approach before teachers can own the curriculum, initial enthusiasm for training has little influence on learning, the location of training does not appear important, and the effects of training do not depend on whether teachers organize or direct the program.

Tobergte and Curtis (2002) maintain that change in schools must be supported by effective supportive structures, one of which is staff development. Pritchard and Marshall (2002) investigated the relationship between district staff development, district "health", and student achievement. District health was defined as management of daily operations, quality of school climate, degree of commitment from teachers and administrators to change, evidence of strategic planning that ensures district focus on learning processes, and positive and negative attitudes of students. One of the urban middle schools found their students' essay scores increased dramatically in response to high quality professional development for the teachers. Professional development takes money, and

this school focused their dollars on high quality staff development. Financial backing also allowed the teachers time and opportunity to collaborate with other schools within the district, state, and nation.

Fullan (2002) states that educational change depends on what teachers think about the change and how they incorporate it into their classroom. Staff development affects what teachers think and do. He views staff development in two complimentary ways: as a powerful strategy for implementing improvements, and as part of the development of schools as a collaborative workplace. It is, therefore, a strategy for specific change, and a strategy for basic organizational change.

Olsen and Kirtman (2002), analyzing observed teacher practice in 36 California schools that restructured over a 3-year period, identified individual and school-wide influences that shape a teacher's relationship to any particular reform. It is this mediating influence that guides the teacher's response to reform and change as it is practiced in the classroom. Some teacher characteristics that influence what they do in the classroom are experience (i.e. as a student, teaching experience, and family life experience), expertise (i.e. as a practitioner and a professional), assumptions, (i.e. about how students learn, child development, and change), career cycle (i.e. new to the teaching profession or teacher burnout), reform cycle (i.e. the point in time in which the teacher came into the school during the change process), personal relationships (i.e. practitioner collaboration), and personal interests (i.e. possessing interests that correspond with the reform efforts).

Comer emphasized the importance of staff training in his reform effort, The School Development Program (1996). He asserts that without proper training in child development, teachers end up punishing children instead of understanding their behavior

and guiding them into more productive efforts. Without a basic knowledge in child development, efforts to reform schools will be unproductive. Thus, educational professionals must be brought along as part of the reform process through continual staff training and development.

This author's experience with staff development at her school for the social skills/violence prevention curriculum, *Second Step* (Grossman et al., 1997), included modeling, co-teaching, pre-planning workshops, observations and video taping of lessons, viewing all-circuit videos during teacher work days, and intensive training for those teachers who wanted to train other teachers. Evaluations were periodically given to teachers to obtain feedback on the staff development. Usually, the feedback was positive, but as the training continued into the 5th year, some veteran teachers remarked it would be more helpful to do updated training only for the new teachers; or those who wanted the support. Staff development, over time, is important in maintaining the integrity and preventing the erosion of the innovation undertaken. This past year, this author met with individual teams of teachers to see what needs they had in relation to staff training, and then responded accordingly.

Staff development is an especially important component for social emotional learning programs in the school. This is due to the fact that usually there is not the pressure from outside sources (i.e. parents, legislatures, community people) for students to have better social skills and more adequate problem solving skills. This is despite the fact that behavior in schools has become more violent over time. Nonetheless, the emphasis is not great for teachers to learn how to enhance a student's social-emotional intelligence. Rather, in this day and time, there is consistent pressure for students'

academic achievement scores to be the number one goal. Therefore, looking at students from a holistic perspective is often overlooked.

Staff development in social-emotional skills is also important because many adults did not grow up acquiring adequate social emotional skills themselves and may feel inadequate and uncomfortable teaching them to students. Having a social-emotional learning program in a school give both students and teachers a chance to enhance their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and, thereby, increase teachers' chances of being more helpful and students' chances of improving academic achievement.

Program Coordinators

Program coordinators are not mentioned in Fullan's (2001) interactive model of key factors of the implementation process. They are included by Fullan as one of the key themes of improvement but are called monitoring/problem-coping. Fullan describes the monitoring theme as one that assists in identifying what is and is not working in the implementation process. This could include resources, solving problems, gathering evaluative information, and planning based on results of the evaluation. At the school where this author assists with implementation of the social skills/violence prevention curriculum, monitoring consists of regularly meeting with each grade's team about how the implementation is going, providing checklists of the scope and sequence of each unit to assist the teachers with keeping up-to-date with the curriculum units, and occasionally observing the curriculum being taught. Team meetings allow time for teachers to inform the coordinator that they need more or different resources (i.e. posters, scope and sequence checklists). Program coordinators also keep parents and teachers informed and

encouraged via newsletters, parent letters, information bulletin boards, and parent meetings.

The work of program coordinators could also be construed as being included under “local characteristics” of the school district in Fullan’s interactive model. In addition, it could also be included in “external characteristics” such as governmental and other agencies that provide guidance in implementing a change. This is not the same, though, as having a designated person in charge of dealing with the complexities and difficulties that arise in the change process and that provide sustained assistance.

In studying several different whole school reforms (i.e. Comer School Development Program, Accelerated Schools, Success for All) through the use of qualitative observations and interviews, Datnow and Southerland (2002) assert that a fulltime facilitator/coordinator is needed to sustain whole school reform efforts. Elias et al., (2003), based on their experiences with Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and reviews of literature, discovered that the presence of a program coordinator or committee to oversee implementation of the reform effort is one key factor associated with the successful and sustained implementation of empirically based prevention/social-emotional learning programs. They believe that the conditions of implementation are more important to the success of the reform endeavor than the program itself, and that a program coordinator is needed to oversee the program to resolve day-to-day problems.

Taylor, Nelson and Adelman (1999) looked at phases and steps a school district went through when incorporating major new approaches. Organizational support and guidance were seen as essential in order for the reform efforts to be successful. Major

systemic change can take years to develop. This requires mentor-ship, technical assistance, and day-by-day facilitation. Similarly, Pritchard and Marshall (2002), investigated the differences in professional development between healthy and unhealthy districts, and concluded that healthy districts commit a major portion of their budget to support a curriculum consultant (project coordinator) who is responsible for assisting and mentoring teachers in their growth and improvement in the school change being undertaken. These consultants meet regularly with each other and other teachers to get feedback and provide support, guidance and direction.

School counselors, by nature of their professional training, can facilitate change at the building level. They have the expertise and flexible schedules that allow them to work with teachers and other school and district staff. School counselors are responsible for the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students. They are increasingly called upon to present outcome data of their counseling interventions. Job skills such as facilitating change and interpersonal relating provide a solid base for being program coordinator or assisting in the coordination. In addition, school counselors are collaborators with community agencies that provide essential contacts from which to draw needed resources.

Adelman (2002) placed school counselors as key players in the initiatives to restructure and reform pupil services (i.e. identification of students with learning difficulties, improving school-community collaborations). School counselors are having ever-increasing opportunities to act as advocates, catalysts, brokers, and facilitators of reform, and to collaborate with community agencies to provide needed changes within schools. Adelman believes the opportunity is present for school counselors to play a part

in shaping policy, share in leadership, and develop school-wide programs to meet the needs of the students.

Especially when it comes to social emotional learning, there is a need for a program coordinator to help school staff with stay focused. Continual emphasis on academic testing and measurement has a tendency to block out other important efforts that may not point directly to increased academic performance. Therefore, it is necessary that someone be in charge to remind the school staff and school boards about the connection between emotional health and well-being and academic achievement. Such statements as “the students that come to the middle school from your school are so much kinder than the others”, and the fact that fewer students from the original school site where the social skills/violence prevention curriculum was begun have been expelled from the middle school and sent to the alternative learning center, provide local feedback consistent with research.

Flexibility in Implementation

Flexibility in the implementation process was described by Fullan (2001) as being a key factor in the *characteristics of change*. It is included under Fullan’s term, complexity within his interactive model. When Finn, Jr. (2002) looked at the issue of accountability in education, he reflected on how charter schools are run. In the charter schools he investigated, he found that it was not unusual for several systems of change to be operating simultaneously. He noted that the best charter schools were the ones where educators were given great flexibility and freedom in implementing curriculum and reform efforts.

Many factors have to be weighed when considering the level of implementation to be accomplished at each school or system. As is the experience of this author within her district, school systems can experience tremendous change simultaneously (i.e. system wide implementation of a social skills/violence prevention curriculum, system wide restructuring, building new schools, increased focus on academic standards). Add to this the great diversity of the student population (the majority is of Latino/a origin), and the need for flexibility is more easily understood. Because of these many changes, people react differently to increased expectancies, like teaching a social skills/violence prevention curriculum. Initially, increased time and energy is required by teachers to learn and internalize the new curriculum and begin to acclimate, making it their own. Understanding and encouragement is required in dealing with the teachers, or discouragement will set in and, possibly, decreased cooperation.

When Ross, Stringfield, Sanders, and Wright (2003) investigated the effectiveness of teachers at restructuring schools (as measured by student achievement gains), compared with the effectiveness of teachers at non-restructuring schools, they discovered that teachers at restructuring schools were more effective over a four-year period. One note of interest was that a teacher changing the grade or subject which she/he had previously taught decreased the efficacy (as measured by student gains) of that teacher. It appears that one can only incorporate so many changes at a time. In order to not offend or discourage staff in the ownership of changes and reform, it makes sense to be flexible and understanding, realizing that individuals will adapt differently based upon several variables. This is of particular importance with social emotional learning. Based upon conversations this author had with various school staff, it became clear that a teacher's

comfort level with teaching social skills was affected by their own personal growth, social skills, and philosophy.

Conclusion

The importance of social-emotional learning for children cannot be overlooked. Students who do not possess skills to control impulses, solve interpersonal problems, and feel empathy for others often begin to fail when they enter school. This frequently leads to students having trouble achieving academically. It is imperative that schools find a way to implement needed changes that will equip these students with skills to succeed.

A review of the literature (Elias et al., 2003) suggests that these students could be helped by learning social skills and problem solving skills. The difficulty arises when these skills are to be taught at school, a convenient place for children to learn them. With the many expectancies put upon schools today, social emotional learning can take a backseat. Even though research suggests that the answer to violence in schools is not a simple, quick fix, school personnel often want a magical, immediate solution. Therefore, when a multi-faceted solution that includes the teaching of social skills is introduced, teachers can become resistant. This resistance to change and doing something differently begins the complex process of implementation.

Based on personal experience of this author and current literature, several factors affect the implementation process of a social skills/violence prevention curriculum. These factors are: organizational structure, rationale for change, staff relationships, financial resources, staff development, the use of a program coordinator, and flexibility in implementation. These factors are interrelated, and not finite. The importance of looking at these factors separately and conjointly when attempting to implement change in a

school or school system is emphasized. Many factors contribute toward creating an atmosphere that will welcome change and help sustain it.

Fullan presents an interactive model of change that includes three major categories: characteristics of change, local characteristics, and external factors. These categories consist of various factors that affect the implementation process.

Characteristics of change include the following variables: (a) need for change, (b) clarity about the goals and means of change, (c) complexity of the difficulty of change required by the individuals responsible for implementation, and (d) quality and practicality of the program. *Local characteristics* include: (a) school district's ability to manage the change, (b) community's and school board's ability to support the change, (c) the principal's support of the change, and (d) teacher's traits in implementing the change. The final category, *external factors*, consists of governmental and other agencies. All noted factors interact to affect the implementation process, according to Fullan (2001).

Coburn (2003) calls for a multidimensional conceptualization of school change and reform. She believes that school change has been under-theorized in the literature, and as such, is a deterrent to sustaining the change and increasing the level of implementation. An in-depth qualitative research design that would encompass this multidimensionality of school change is needed, and would allow for needed aspects and awareness of change to become evident, especially as it pertains to social-emotional programs. Fullan agrees and believes that research that increases our understanding of implementation may encourage successful planned educational change (2001). He further states that if this theory of change leads us to a need for better implementation plans and planners, we need to be able to explain what causes this "better implementation".

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CHAPTER 2

EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF A SOCIAL SKILLS/VIOLENCE PREVENTION CURRICULUM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Social-emotional learning has received increased attention in recent years as an important goal of education and as an essential component of how children learn (Elias, Bruene-Butler, Blum, & Schuyler, 2000). It also has been shown to be a factor in the prevention of violence in schools while simultaneously promoting the academic success of students (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Perry, 2003). Using the Resolving Conflict Creatively program, many school districts have experienced a decrease in aggression in students and an increase in peaceful learning environments that have led to increased academic learning (Aber, Brown, Roderick, & Lantieri, 2001). Further, the U.S. Department of Education research branch, the Institute of Education Sciences, is preparing to make eight four-year grants to researchers to examine the academic and social effects of social-emotional programs (<http://www.sshs.samhsa.gov>).

Outcome research on *Second Step*, a social skills and violence prevention curriculum developed by the Committee for Children, has had promising results (Taub, 2001). When implemented at a rural elementary school in the third and sixth grades, and compared to a similar nearby school which did not receive the intervention, significant improvements in social competence and antisocial behaviors were seen at the school

which received *Second Step*. Results were based on the School Social Behavior Scale, a behavior rating instrument that assists teachers in screening for social competence and antisocial behavior patterns in children and adolescents (Merrell, 1993). Additionally, modest decreases in aggression were seen by Grossman et al., (1997) in students who received *Second Step* when compared to control students who did not receive *Second Step*. Yet, Grossman et al., (1997) note that well-designed programs alone are not sufficient to produce positive changes. A program may be well-designed, yet not implemented in an effective manner in a school or school district.

Schoiack-Edstrom, Frey, and Beland (2002) evaluated the *Second Step, Middle School/Junior High* program to determine its' effect on students' attitudes regarding aggression and perceived difficulty of performing social skills. Seven-hundred and fourteen sixth through eighth – grade students were surveyed prior to and after receiving *Second Step* instruction. Students who received the instruction in their second year of middle school showed decreased endorsement of aggression and perceived difficulty of performing social skills on survey answers, compared to those students surveyed who did not receive the *Second Step* instruction. These findings were based on results of the survey given prior to and after receiving *Second Step* instruction. Results were less consistent for those in their first year of middle/junior high school. The authors call for additional research to investigate program effects under varying conditions (e.g., lesson quality, pacing of lessons) and with long-term exposure.

Even though empirical evidence points to the value of social skills/violence prevention training, and the importance of implementing such programs to decrease the rate of dropouts, it is difficult for schools to implement such a curriculum given the

stressors that are continually placed on educational systems (Elias et al., 2000). The implementation process of any program, reform or change in an educational setting is a complex phenomenon. It is because of this complexity that implementation often fails. Add to this the difficulty of implementing a curriculum that does not emphasize academics, and the implementation process becomes even more difficult because of the current state of pressure on academic accountability (Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003).

Based on experiences of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and literature that discusses the unsuccessful attempts at implementation, Elias et al., (2003) discovered that implementing successful educational programs, especially in urban districts, have been disappointing. Domitrovich and Greenberg (2000), when reviewing 34 prevention/intervention programs in schools and school districts, note that many of the highest-quality programs have difficulty being implemented in naturalistic settings due to the lack of attention to the implementation process. They state that this leads to a reduction of effective programs implemented, and weakens the likelihood that replications will resemble the original successful program.

Schools are called upon to provide safe environments for their students. They are held accountable when violent situations occur. Recent research shows the benefit of comprehensive, preventive measures to ensure that schools stay safe (Eisenberg et al., 2003; Frey, Huschstein, & Guzzo, 2000; Garbarino, 1999). Though proven effective prevention programs may be selected by schools, lack of successful implementation will decrease their actual effectiveness. This paper examines those factors that affect the implementation process in order to assist schools and school districts in successful

prevention and intervention efforts designed to reduce violence and increase engagement in schools.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine educators' perceptions of the factors that impede and facilitate the implementation process of a social skills/violence prevention curriculum. Implementation of any curriculum can be difficult. Many factors interact that can interfere with this implementation process. For example, timing of an attempted implementation in a school may affect its success because of lack of available resources (i.e. time, money, personnel). A school may simultaneously attempt to implement several major changes which require attention and energy from those involved (i.e. creating schools of choice while attempting to implement a social skills/violence prevention curriculum). In addition, implementing a social skills/violence prevention curriculum can be difficult due to its indirect focus on increased academic gain. Most programs implemented in a school are academically based, and focus on improving the academic achievement of the students. Academic improvement (i.e. accountability) is a major goal for all schools at this point in time, due to federal legislation of the No Child Left Behind Act (Public Law No. 107-110, 2002). Schools and administrators are continually looking for ways to improve students' scores on academic tests and to show accountability for their instructional programs.

Social emotional skills have been shown to increase students' cooperativeness, increase their sense of belonging, and decrease students' aggressiveness. However, sometimes schools are ineffective in implementing the curricula that would bring these positive results about (Frey et al., 2000; Elias et al., 2000). Administrators may feel

conflicted about implementing such a social-emotional curriculum due to unfamiliarity with such programs, lack of knowledge about related research, limited amount of time, and pressure from others regarding academic accountability. Important information can be gathered by talking to the key players at schools where implementation is in progress, to discover what factors facilitate and deter this implementation process. This may be particularly important for research on *Second Step*, because prior research focuses on program effectiveness rather than the implementation process itself.

Studies have investigated the effectiveness of various social skills/violence prevention programs in school systems, but many of those studies lack depth in describing how/if the implementation affects the daily interactions between the teacher and students, the pedagogical beliefs about how students learn, and teachers' expectations for students (Coburn, 2003). Public school history has many instances of reforms that barely scratch the surface of being implemented (Elmore, 1996), and teachers tend to do what they've always done (Spillane, 2000). It cannot be taken for granted that implementation of any curriculum is taking place. Therefore, it is important to document the implementation to determine why an intervention does and does not work (Schoiack-Edstrom et al., 2002).

Durlak and Wells (1998) noted that only five percent of approximately 1,200 published prevention studies include data on its implementation. In addition, they found that 68.5% of these programs were described too broadly to be replicated in other schools. If the implementation process is not considered carefully, there can be great variance in outcome, and potentially effective programs can be dropped (Elias et al., 2003). Such variables as the implementation system (i.e., process and structure of the

implementation and staff training), characteristics of the implementer (e.g., teacher and school staff), and characteristics of the setting in which the program is implemented (e.g., school climate, administrative support, and district support) provide invaluable information that can affect program outcome (Chen, 1998). Additional research is needed to learn how these factors interact to affect outcome. This information is frequently missing in the reports of effective programs. This criticism is applicable to general social-emotional learning curricula as well as to specific curriculum (i.e., *Second Step*), (Domitrovich & Greenberg, 2000; Elias et al., 2003).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine educators' perceptions of the factors that impede and facilitate the implementation process of a social skills/violence prevention curriculum, based upon educators' perception. In addition, it is important to consider this information within the context of its individual and unique school setting. Local characteristics may vary in significant ways with each site, and knowledge about this variability can contribute toward its effective implementation (Fullan, 2001; Chen, 1998; Domitrovich & Greenberg, 2000). The questions in this research include: (1) What factors affect the process of implementing a social skills/violence prevention curriculum in two urban elementary schools in the southeast? and (2) How do these factors interact with each other to affect the implementation process?

Method

Setting

For the past six years, a school system in northeast Georgia has been involved in implementing *Second Step* (Grossman et al., 1997), a violence prevention curriculum that teaches social skills and problem-solving skills. *Second Step* involves a series of

developmentally based lessons that include three components: social skills, anger management, and problem solving skills. The number of lessons depends on the grade level of the student, and are to be taught in sequence by their homeroom teacher. The lessons are depicted on large attractive cards that have appropriate pictures on one side, and outlined lessons on the other. These lessons have been shown to help decrease aggressive behavior, and to increase children's social skills.

The implementation process began with this author's desire to prevent students from being aggressive and violent at school, and to intervene with those who already displayed aggressive behavior. *Second Step* is developmentally based and has had some positive empirical results (Frey et al., 2000; Grossman et al., 1997; Schoiack-Edstrom et al., 2002). Initially, *Second Step* was introduced in one of the district's elementary schools, and the current effort is to expand to all five elementary schools. In addition to teaching the curriculum, teachers at this school (i.e., School A) had been trained in conducting classroom meetings by one of the professors from the university participating in this study. These meetings were a means with which to encourage a peaceful classroom environment and an arena in which students could learn to solve their problems with one another (Edwards & Mullis, 2004). Additionally, a mentor component, parent education component, and staff training were added.

Target Schools. Two urban elementary schools (i.e., School A and School B – each containing grades pre k – five) participated in this study. School A is the school where the implementation of *Second Step* originated and has continued over time. The two schools are located in a small urban school district in the Southeast U.S., where a majority of Latino students attend the schools, and a major portion of the families qualify

for free and reduced lunch. In addition, many of these families are transient (i.e. move within the school year to another school district and/or another state).

School A consists of 85% Latino, 10% African American, and 5% Caucasian, Asian, and other students. More than 90% of the school population qualifies for free and reduced lunch. School A has had a consistently strong leadership over time (i.e. there have only been two principals in the last 15 years. This author is counselor in this school and frequently hears comments such as “I was told this was a great place to work”, and “This school has a good reputation in the community”, and “Parents love this school”.

The school climate is characterized by a positive, nurturing, empowering climate as demonstrated by low teacher turnover and comments made by visitors that come into the school (i.e., mentors, *Second Step* site visitor, International Baccalaureate site visitor). Teachers consist of 17 Caucasian, two African American, one Asian, one Latino, including four males and 17 females. The majority of teachers are at this school out of choice. Five years ago, when the superintendent retired, a new superintendent initiated the development of *school choice* for the parents and each school developed a different specialized focus (i.e. school choice). At this school, the focus has been on working toward certification as an International Baccalaureate Academy, Primary Years Program (PYP). This focus was chosen by the new principal, who came aboard when the prior principal retired, in conjunction with those teachers interested in this effort. There was an additional effort to allow teachers to switch schools congruent with their philosophy with the understanding that there had to be enough qualified teachers at each of the five elementary schools to meet that school’s needs. Teachers being given this choice of where to teach could be a contributing factor toward the harmony among School A’s

staff. In addition, each teacher who was at School A originally and who chose to stay (85%) also received a personal written invitation from the principal to stay.

School B consists of 45% Caucasian, 45% Latino, and 10% African American, Asian, and other students. Approximately 70% of this population qualifies for free and reduced lunch. Similarly to School A, the principal at School B chose to be at this school and also chose its school choice focus – Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2004). School B's principal replaced the prior principal who retired. In addition, similar to School A's principal, this was a promotion from assistant school principal to the position of principal. During her first year as principal at School B, implementation of *Second Step* began. School B was also known by this author to be a welcoming school, and one whose school choice focuses on the academic, as well as emotional, well-being of the child. Enrollment during School B's first year of school choice was such a success that students had to be turned away and directed toward other schools of choice in the district.

This author previously worked with School B's principal when she was assistant principal at School A. When the schools of choice were implemented and the former principal retired from School B, the assistant principal from School A became principal of School B. The prior positive working relationship this author had with this principal, the fact that as an assistant principal she had been involved with *Second Step* from its inception five years ago, and the fact that the assistant principal chose Multiple Intelligences as her option for school choice may be positive factors in her willingness to participate in this study. In addition, two of the three teachers interviewed at School B had previously worked with this author at School A and had previously been involved with *Second Step*.

Second Step curricula (kits) are not inexpensive, and resources to fund the curriculum were gradually obtained. Various grant resources were discovered as this author began to search for funding. The first *Second Step* kit was purchased in the first year of implementation through a small grant received from Southern Poverty Law Center. Additional *Second Step* kits were found through a state innovation grant the following year, with the remainder of the kits being purchased through a Children's Trust Fund Commission grant.

Administrative support was obtained through a combined meeting with the director of the university project, this author, the principal, assistant principal, superintendent and assistant superintendent of the original school site. These meetings were held periodically to provide support and guidance for the implementation process. In addition, graduate assistants from the participating university assisted in introducing this curriculum to the original fifth grade teachers who taught *Second Step*.

The first year of implementation in School A involved four graduate assistants, a counselor intern, and this author. Selected fifth grade classrooms received the *Second Step* curriculum the first year. The second year, all fourth and fifth grade students received *Second Step*, with the participating university conducting evaluation of the curriculum. In the second year of implementation, teachers were encouraged to remain in the classroom to participate and observe while the graduate assistants, our intern, or this author taught the lessons. In the third year of implementation teachers taught *Second Step* without university assistance, and with the counselor acting only as a source of support. In addition, new teachers that came to the school each year received *Second Step* training. This process continued into the fourth year of implementation.

The fifth year of implementation involved a restructuring of the school district's elementary schools, with two new schools being built. This implementation process was quite an endeavor because several new teachers had been hired, and others were moving to a different school. This was also the year two grants were received to purchase enough *Second Step* kits for the remaining schools. Representatives from each school received specialized, intensive training provided by Committee for Children, the authors of *Second Step*. These teachers were then responsible for going back to their respective schools and training the other staff.

During the fifth year of implementation, all of the elementary schools initiated the use of *Second Step*, though one elementary school quickly put it aside. This was because they had a different grant, of which this author was unaware. All five elementary schools were using *Second Step*, but, at different levels of implementation. At this current time, four of the five elementary schools are continuing to use *Second Step* on some level. Continual support is offered by the counselor at each school, and evaluation by the university is ongoing.

Participants

Interviewees in the research study were drawn from two of the five elementary schools in the school district (School A and School B). These two schools were chosen because one was the original school site where the curriculum began, and the other school site was one in which *Second Step* was being taught in most of the K-5 homerooms by the teachers. Implementation at School B was facilitated by the fact that a large number of trained teachers at this school had transferred from School A when

restructuring of the district took place. All the teachers who transferred were trained in the *Second Step* curriculum.

Three teachers each were chosen from School A and School B for the interviews. The counselor from School B and this author (i.e., counselor from School A) conjointly chose the teachers to be interviewed. These teachers were consistently teaching *Second Step* and could offer valuable information about their perception of the implementation process. The teachers from School A, including those who are now at School B, had attended an intensive three day training offered by Committee for Children, the authors and publishers of the curriculum. This training prepared them as “trainers of teachers”, whereby they would be qualified to go back to their school and train teachers to implement the curriculum. These teachers each had three years’ prior experience teaching *Second Step* at School A. Teachers chosen from School B included one teacher who had never taught *Second Step*, and two teachers who had transferred from School A during the schools of choice transition as previously mentioned. In addition, the counselor at School B and the counselor at School A (i.e., the author and interviewer in this study) also participated in the interview process. Counselors are responsible for facilitating the implementation at each school, and are also called program facilitators in this study. In addition, the two school principals were interviewed to get their perception of the complete implementation process.

Participants in this study contribute varied experience to education. School A and School B administrators have worked 27 and 28 years experience respectively. Only two of the teachers interviewed had less than ten years experience, with the remaining teachers having between 13 and 27 years experience. The counselor from School A had

13 years experience in education (five as a teacher and eight as a counselor), and School B's counselor had prior experience as a state agency counselor, but no experience as a school counselor. Overall, School B's participant educators had much more total experience than those at School A. Participant teachers are made up of four veteran teachers and two with few years experience. Due to the small number of males in education, nine interviewees were female and one was male.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Teachers/Administrators	Highest Degree Held	Years Experience
Female/School A	Bachelors	9
Female/School A	Masters	23
Male/School A	Bachelors	4
Counselor/School A	Specialist/PhD. in progress	13
Principal/School A	Doctorate	27
Female/School B	Masters	13
Female/School B	Specialist	27
Female/School B	Masters	20
Counselor/School B	Masters	19
Principal/School B	Specialist	28

Graduate Assistants. Two graduate assistants from a major southeastern university participated in the study by transcribing the taped interviews. Each graduate assistant was a student in the Master's program for Professional Counseling at the participating university in this study. In order to ensure accuracy of the transcriptions, this author listened to the tapes while reading the transcriptions approximately 40% of the time. Transcriptions were found to be consistently accurate. An additional graduate student in Professional Counseling from this same university assisted in coding the interviews for themes.

Measures

Interviews. Interviews are a valuable way to gather in-depth information from respondents, due to the elaborated narrative responses they prompt from participants (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Semi-structured interviews provide directionality and focus, while simultaneously requesting new, informative, and in-depth narrative responses. Information from these semi-structured interviews assist in confirming themes, identifying new themes, and illustrating important interactions between key themes. In this study, interviews were used to gather information about the implementation of *Second Step*. The open-ended personal responses provide relevant information from each respondent that illuminate that educator's perspective of the implementation process. Questions about initial involvement with *Second Step*, personal comprehension of the rationale for using the curriculum, and any factors that may encourage or deter its use were some of the questions asked. See Appendix A and B for a complete list of interview questions. The information gathered could assist schools and school districts in implementing proven effective social skills/violence prevention

curricula, which could lead to increased engagement in school, decreased aggressiveness, and decreased dropout rates.

Eighteen interviews were conducted, each lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. The author answered the interview questions on paper and submitted them for coding. In addition, one teacher at School B was only able to be interviewed once. The content in second interviews was based on results of first interviews. Clarification and confirmation of interview themes was sought at second interviews, in addition to being open to new information and negative examples.

Field Notes. In addition to information gathered through semi-formal interviews, field notes were used to provide additional insight about the implementation process for School A. Being a participant observer in School A, this author had access to this additional information that Schensul et al., (1999) says enriches the data gathered through interviews. These face-to-face interactions provide an in-depth view into the implementation process that is not easily assessed through interviews due to the fact that often those being observed are not aware of this observation, and therefore, can be more frank about what they say about the implementation process. These observations were taken from various sources (i.e., *Second Step* site visit by Committee for Children grant coordinator; casual conversations with other teachers; interactions between this author and school personnel from both schools, team meetings in which this author participated). Team meetings at School A consisted of teachers from each grade level meeting weekly to discuss curriculum, students, and any items that affected the students' education (i.e. relationships with peers, situations at home, classroom management). These field notes were collected to provide patterns that are not obvious in episodic observations.

Classroom Meetings. In implementing *Second Step*, teachers were encouraged to use classroom meetings as a method to facilitate this implementation. Classroom meetings are a way to provide environmental support for using skills from the *Second Step* curriculum to solve real problem situations. A few teachers had been conducting classroom meetings at School A when *Second Step* instruction began. A professor from the participating university, who is an expert and author on the use of classroom meetings, conducted a staff training workshop for School A on the use of classroom meetings. After this workshop, this author continued to encourage and support classroom meetings at School A as a way to facilitate the practice of the *Second Step* skills students were learning, and as a way to encourage peace and connectedness in the classroom. The majority of teachers in School A continued to hold classroom meetings.

In School B, two of the teachers who had transferred to this school from School A had been previously trained in the use of classroom meetings. These two teachers were two of those interviewed at School B. They reported that they continued to use classroom meetings as a way to use the skills *Second Step* taught their students, and as a way to encourage their students to solve their classroom problems. None of the other teachers at School B, to this author's knowledge, conducted classroom meetings.

Procedure

Participants signed a consent form outlining purpose and explanation of the study, assuring anonymity, and providing the option to withdraw participation at any time. As an incentive to participate, each interviewee received a \$20.00 gift certificate to a local restaurant. Additionally, participants were informed they would be made aware of the research study results if they so desired.

Prospective respondents were given a brief overview of the purpose of the research study. It was explained that interviews would be analyzed for themes that would add to the literature on the process of implementing a social skills/violence prevention curriculum in elementary schools. The expected length of time to complete the interviews would be 45-60 minutes each. Each interview was audio taped, and transcribed by a graduate assistant. Second interviews were recursive, being based upon first interviews to confirm or disaffirm original information. New information was also sought in these second interviews.

Data Analysis

An initial orientation meeting was conducted with the assisting graduate assistant who also would be coding the interviews for themes. Discussion of the purpose of the study and recent implementation literature acquainted her with the topic (i.e., time, staff relationships, staff development). Qualitative research, coding for themes, and social skills/violence prevention literature was reviewed. In addition, the importance of having an open mind about the themes she observed, whether or not they had been previously mentioned in the literature, was discussed. The graduate assistant was then given a copy of each of the 18 interviews as they were transcribed, and asked to read and code each one for a total of 18 interviews. This author also read and coded the 18 interviews. This process was done separately, and then a joint meeting of this author and the graduate assistant allowed for discussion and consensus of themes. Similar and exact wording from the taped interviews, differences in settings, individual behaviors of participants and other dimensions of the school culture that may affect the implementation process were discussed (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Experimenting with different themes and

checking them out with each other for a fit, based upon similar wording to describe similar events by the educators' interviewed, edged us closer to a more accurate consensus of themes. Weeding out themes that we could not agree on helped guide the search for consensus. This constant comparison of identifiers provides a set of consistent themes which allow valuable information to be discovered.

Results

Themes that were discovered in this study will be presented below. Interactions between these themes will be discussed in the Discussion section. A more complete list of the quotes will be located in Appendix A.

Eight themes were found reflecting the participants' perceptions of factors that had important effects on the implementation process. These themes arose from the interview questions, observations, and field notes analyzed in this study.

Themes

The eight themes that arose from the interviews are listed below. These themes are the result of individually and jointly coded interviews, observations, and field notes.

Rationale. The theme, "rationale", arose frequently in the interviews. This theme reflected the importance the respondents gave of understanding the purpose and benefit of teaching *Second Step*. Those interviewed stressed the importance of the rationale in influencing the educators to implement *Second Step*. They believed that if the rationale was not sufficiently clear, the teachers would be less likely to implement it or, at least, to implement it inconsistently. This is due to the time pressure they felt because of federal, state, and district standards and mandated testing. For example:

...I would have some research articles for the teachers. Even if I think the research articles are too long, summarize the articles, show the data,

something so that you can say, put an overhead up and say look at the difference this has made with these children and let me show you why if you help the children learn it helps them learn to resolve conflict. (Teacher 1, School B)

One principal believed it was important for the staff to see the implementation as a “sense of urgency” in order for them to take ownership of the implementation process, especially given the stress of time in education. The theme of “time” appeared to interact with “rationale” by emphasizing the necessity of the rationale being strong enough to justify the use of time during the school week to teach the curriculum. Note the following quote:

First, the first thing sort of under-riding through the whole change process is people need to see the need to do it...So if you’ve got...a sense of urgency. (Administrator, School A)

In addition, some of the educators expressed that seeing positive results in their students’ behavior encouraged them to implement the curriculum, as the quotes below illustrate:

...I’ve got several (students) that every time... during class meetings will say, I just wanna say, this is the first time I’ve ever had friends. (Teacher 1, School A)

...I realized the children respond to it (*Second Step*) so well, and it, what it does is it brings the class (together) as a family. It bonds them, and this is what I had never had before, and I thought it was just a real unique experience that the children had problems, of course that was the fourth and fifth grades. (Teacher 1, School A)

Other respondents’ rationale for teaching *Second Step* was because of the benefit they believe it gave their students. Teachers believed the stark conditions of their students’ poverty-stricken homes, and the negative modeling they saw decreased their chances in learning how to successfully problem-solve. Note the following quote:

I think the majority of the teachers see the value in it, and it's because of the needs of their students with the high poverty population and the riskiness of their everyday lives...(Administrator, School A)

One respondent made simultaneous comments about understanding the importance of the curriculum while also admitting to inconsistency in actually teaching it.

And although I think it's important that children learn these concepts, and social skills...I can work on them through the books I read and things like that, and not have a separate program that I have to keep up with. (Teacher 1, School B)

In general, teachers who understood the rationale for using *Second Step* gave it more importance, and implemented it more consistently.

Staff Training. It is impossible to successfully implement a change at the school or district level without appropriate staff training (Fullan, 2001). This staff training can consist of organized training from groups who are supporting a particular change or implementation, such as Committee for Children did for most of the teachers in this study. Staff training can also consist of school based staff training designed by those leading the implementation or change, such as the school counselors did in Schools A and B. Additionally, teachers in this study mentioned they enjoyed watching each other teach the curriculum, enjoyed watching the videos with one another, and just talking with each other about the implementation. These interactions with one another appeared to be very important to the respondents interviewed. Teachers and administrators, alike, commented that observing, sharing, and collaborating with one another was important to them. Both principals expressed the importance of this interaction between teachers in order for the teachers to get a realistic idea of the essence of the implementation. In addition, one principal believed that this collaboration could be even more encouraging to teachers than staff training provided by a trainer from the company. All but two of the

teachers interviewed received intensive training from Committee for Children. See the following quotes from respondents in discussing how they felt about the staff training:

So, the second grade teacher, I think has been a good resource to her, um, colleagues down there in the second grade. (Administrator, School B)

We do have kits in our classrooms because we were given kits last year and last year there was a training video that we watched. But, not this year, this year there has been nothing. If someone else is doing it – it's more likely to capture your sense that you could do that too, than going to a big conference where you have a speaker that tells you this is the way to improve schools. ...you talk to a real person. (Teacher 1, School B)

Teachers mentioned the benefit they experienced in having the program facilitator, (i.e., counselor at their school) demonstrate lessons in their classes, organize a video clip to be shown school wide for observation, and establish organizational tools (i.e., scope and sequence charts) that could assist them in organizing the lessons taught. This was done at School A. The program facilitator's role is intricately intertwined with the staff training component due to the fact that she is the one responsible for this training. The counselor from School B remarked that she would quarterly ask for feedback on how teachers felt the implementation was going. She would then adjust her assistance to them based upon this feedback. See the quote below:

I know you (counselor) taught at least one lesson, and that helped...that helped me simply because I was a new (to this school) teacher, and was feeling a little hesitant about things. So that was a support, and I know if I ran into something...(Teacher 3, School A)

Some respondents expressed negative experiences they had with staff training. One participant thought she had not been fully prepared for teaching *Second Step*. This person felt that the curriculum had just been thrown at her, and she was told to go do it. Additionally, another respondent stated that there needed to be clearer, more concise directions in the use of the curriculum, and one respondent stated that she did not get to

watch the training video this year, like they had done in the past. Additionally, it was mentioned that the rationale for teaching *Second Step* had not been emphasized enough at School B during the staff training, and this person thought that this affected the importance teachers put on implementing the curriculum. Below are quotes demonstrating these thoughts:

I've heard nothing about it (teaching *Second Step*). We do have kits in our classrooms because we were given kits last year and last year there was a training video that we watched. But not this year, this year there has been nothing at all said about it. (Teacher 1, School B)

...need clear, concise directions, number one...from the facilitator.
(Teacher 1, School B)

Basically, teachers were provided staff training, but noted a need for more collaboration with peers when being trained.

Teacher Ownership. Ownership is defined as making something one's own or taking responsibility for the outcome. Teacher ownership can be seen when teachers find ways to incorporate the implementation into their repertoire of teaching behaviors and to use it in their everyday school life. For example, with *Second Step*, these behaviors included the following: teaching the curriculum in a consistent manner, highlighting the social skills and problem-solving skills the students are learning throughout the school day, incorporating the new vocabulary into their lessons and transitional times such as recess, lunch time, and bathroom breaks, and informing parents of the skills being taught. Holding classroom meetings is another way in which teachers take ownership of *Second Step*. Note the quotes below:

We created a talking porch. ...and they would write their problem down, both of them would and then...they would go to the mediator.(Teacher 2, School B)

It's not just a specific once a week thing. I try to refer to it all week long, and it's been very beneficial... (Teacher 1, School A)

Additional teacher activities such as creating tests to review *Second Step* lessons, creating journals to write about their feelings, using a daily oral language activity, and having lessons on giving compliments were some of the examples teachers gave when interviewed. Please note the following quotes:

I thought it might be good for the kids to do a non-graded test just for them to review, okay, what is empathy, what is...all the different conflicting feelings and predicting, and all the different things that they learned in the first one. (Teacher 3, School A)

And we write in journals a lot... (Teacher 2, School A)

In addition, even though these participants frequently mentioned the time pressure they often felt due to the focus on testing, and stated that it was the lack of time that got in their way of teaching *Second Step*, some teachers found a way around this. Note the following quotes:

I started doing it once a week... on a regular basis at a regular time. And I feel like the consistency, that was where my success came through. (Teacher 2, School B)

It's easier when they set a time when they have their homeroom up and whatever, and do it (*Second Step*), one day a week and this is my time... (Teacher 2, School B)

In general teacher ownership affected the extent to which *Second Step* was implemented.

Teacher Characteristics. As in any other career, personal characteristics of individuals affect how they operate in that field. Whether an individual is innovative, adventurous, enthusiastic, depressed, fearful, pre-occupied, or overwhelmed, these characteristics affect their teaching styles. Everyone has inclinations toward certain behaviors, adaptations, and responses. It is these characteristics that surfaced when

discussing the implementation of *Second Step* with the educators. Notice the quotes below:

I think that (differences in people) plays into it. Sharing myself...it's so natural for me... (Teacher 1, School A)

...a number of teachers...they don't like change. (Teacher 3, School A)

It was...it just seems natural to me. (Teacher 3, School A)

Some teachers expressed, in contrast, to how they saw other teachers, that they were more interested in teaching the whole child rather than focusing on test scores.

Another teacher talked about his strong belief of using a character education program like *Second Step* to help mold the classroom environment. Notice the following quotes:

...some people don't realize how beneficial it is in the big picture. Some people are much more focused on academics – not looking at the whole ...my focus is more the whole (child)...(Teacher 1, School A)

If I didn't have this program, I would still be teaching them some – some character education stuff just by example...I thought, you know...there needs to be a character ed program... (Teacher 3, School A)

The teachers interviewed who had previously taught *Second Step* were more comfortable with the curriculum, and more enthusiastic toward teaching it, unlike the teachers who had never taught it. See the following quote:

...I think it is a flexible program. They don't say, you have to read the card...you have to teach it this way'''' you can make up related questions on your own...I think that's flexible enough for any teacher to do it. (Teacher 3, School A)

In addition, individuals react differently to the pressures and stress of working in a school, whether this stress is due to high demands on the teacher due to a high poverty population of students, or whether the stress is due to the pressure on teachers due to high stakes testing. Some teachers may be primarily punishing when it comes to children's

misbehaviors, and others may intervene with such things as classroom meetings. Some may deal with the stress by weeding out anything that is not academic. For example:

I had a great year last year. I had good class meetings... Mainly I'll reserve in-school suspension for very serious things...(Teacher 1, School A)

One barrier that I had noted over the few years is the attitude of the individual teacher. That "this is not our responsibility". (Administrator, School B)

In general, teacher characteristics influenced the comfort and frequency with which the curriculum was taught.

Administrative Support. When asking the interviewees about the barriers and facilitators that affected their implementation of *Second Step*, the role of administrators was repeatedly emphasized. It was almost as if teachers needed an "excuse" to teach the curriculum so they would not feel guilty for taking the time to do so. Notice the following quote:

I would say that you could not have, have a program...the program wouldn't be effective unless the administration and the leadership of the school says that it can be...people that want to do it would feel like they couldn't do it because of the academic thing and then the other way around is that people that were reluctant to do it would never be getting that little push to go ahead... (Administrator, School A)

Although the principals interviewed supported the implementation of *Second Step* to a degree, some teachers yearned for more overt support. Two things became clear in coding the data: teachers believed there would be more teachers consistently implementing *Second Step* if there was a directive given from the superintendent or assistant superintendent to do so and if principals stressed the necessity of the implementation. In comparison, one teacher mentioned a former superintendent whose

support had been important because he was an alumna of the university that assisted with the beginning implementation in this school district. Note the quotes below:

...I think ...when it (the *Second Step* grant) came out, Dr. ___, if he had just put out something to all the teachers in their boxes stating that this is coming, and this is what we need to do... Whenever you get a message from *the president*, off the top it already carries an awful lot of weight. It's not a guidance counselor running around you know, with one more thing. (Teacher 2, School B)

Um, I think if it came from the superintendent or assistant superintendent or something, it would have a little muscle behind it. (Teacher 2, School B)

Additionally, this author, as counselor and program facilitator of *Second Step* in School A, saw how intricately intertwined financial resources were with administrative support. Schools in this district are encouraged to participate in site-based management, which allows the individual school principals to have more control over their school's finances.

Traditionally, this has been a small school district that has not set aside a separate budget for the counseling department. When implementation of *Second Step* began, there were no funds with which to purchase the curriculum. Several grants provided the financial support that was needed to initiate the implementation process and to continue it to the other four elementary schools and the one middle school. This was helpful, though each kit was shared by two teachers, and coordination of lessons was a necessity. Below is a quote that illustrates this influence of "administrative support" on "financial resources".

I know it's more expensive to do it that way, but uh, instead of sharing the kits... (because) you'd have one teacher doing a unit on anger, and you'd have another teacher doing something else. (Teacher 2, School B)

Administrative support was noted by teachers and administrators as holding significant influence on the implementation process.

Simultaneous School Changes. The two schools involved in this study, along with the other three elementary schools in this district, were implementing major systemic changes at the time of this study. These changes involved each of the five elementary schools, two of which were new, choosing a focus for their school in an effort to offer “schools of choice” to parents. Parents were given choices as to where their children would be going to school, due to the schools no longer being based on developmental age (i.e., kindergarten - first grade, second – third grade, fourth – fifth grade). School A chose “International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program”, and School B chose “Multiple Intelligences”. This reorganization plan was implemented to accommodate the large influx of Latino/a students that had moved into the community, to create fairness for the minority populations in choosing where their child would go to school, and to provide exciting and challenging educational experiences for the students. As long as the families lived within the school district, parents were assured that their children would be provided bus transportation to their school of choice. This reorganization of the elementary schools was guided by a new superintendent and an assistant superintendent that came in the middle of the implementation process of *Second Step*. Given all these major changes this school district has undergone in the last five years, it is not surprising that these and other simultaneous changes (i.e., federal and state mandated testing requirements) were mentioned by respondents as having influenced the implementation process of *Second Step*. Below are quotes from those interviewed that demonstrate this theme:

Well, we're just now transitioning into an I.B. (International Baccalaureate) Academy...the curriculum is totally changing... and the curriculum is totally changing (Georgia Performance Standards)...and I think you'll have further panic getting the curriculum (*Second Step*) taught. (Teacher 2, School A)

What we've done in the past three years has been unbelievable...those who've been through it are astounded, and very proud...she (Administrator, School A) and I were together, and we almost switched places and both established our own schools and own faculty. (Administrator, School B)

...we're housing two schools (while a new school is being completed) under this (one) roof until Christmas. The culture has totally changed. (Administrator, School B)

Simultaneous school and district changes required much staff and financial resources. Teachers and administrators, alike, stated they felt stressed due to the many changes being implemented.

Staff Relationships. Each of the schools believed staff relationships to be important in the implementation process. They also saw relationships as important to sustaining this change, and in general, expressed positive feelings about their own personal school relationships. The importance of staff relationships to them can be also be seen by the fact that the majority of teachers chose to stay at their own school during the school choice transition. This could be interpreted that they felt comfortable at their school. Notice the comments below about these relationships:

We have an incredible team at our school. And our team is just so cohesive, that what they're actually finding time around the time constraints, and what they're doing with *Second Step*. (Counselor, School B)

Trust is a big component...(Counselor, School B)

Even though the comments were positive in nature, there was one concern about competition between staff that arose in the interviews. This competition seemed to be a

result of the focus on test scores based on local, state, and federally mandated testing. Teachers are required to post their classroom test scores, without student names, on a bulletin board inside their school and have them available for parents and other stakeholders on the school website. Based upon this author's observations at her own school, it is clear teachers felt pressure from this requirement, and some resented it. Others believed it helped them and their students to do their best, noting that their students enjoyed watching the pictorial graphs that depicted their classroom's achievement. Although, as noted in the quote below, some teachers may blame last year's teacher if their students are not achieving:

The strengths are that this is a very close-knit faculty, despite some of the changes the past couple of years with shifting around teachers. The teachers get along fairly well. We've got a good, tight group – tight-knit group. They like each other, there are no fights. But it's the changes that I'm seeing and the competition. It's like third graders. Teachers now have got the second grade students, and from what I can see second grade teachers who didn't get, I don't think, around to the multiplication... (Counselor, School B)

In general, the staff felt close to one another, while acknowledging the competition between them because of the focus on posting classroom scores.

Time. Time was a theme that appeared to be of great concern to the teachers and administrators alike. Teachers expressed great concern about the pressure they felt because of locally, state, and federally backed mandates for testing and accountability. Much of their time is spent on trying to help students reach their maximum academic ability. It was noted that a teacher's evaluation as an educator, to some extent, depended on the test results of their students. In addition, as mentioned previously, the schools in this district are required to display pre and post test results in the hallways of their schools, and to have them available for all to view on the school district website. Note the

following quotes, and note Appendix A for the extensive impact time had on the implementation process:

You have your CRCT, you have all of your requirements to push down you, and of course see this is the first year we have done the pre/post tests...but there has to be a balance... (Teacher 2, School B)

...well, I...one barrier is this whole time, education, the time in classroom, you know you are vying for the educational time...teachers are scrambling to say, ok, I've gotta meet this criteria, then okay, the test is coming. You don't want to be in needs improvement, and you throw all that into the mix, and then you get a new teacher who's a first year teacher. It's just overwhelming for the teacher. (Counselor, School B)

In general, time was mentioned frequently by administrators, teachers, and counselors as interfering with the implementation of *Second Step*.

Discussion

Chen's (1998) development of theory-driven evaluations is providing increasing usefulness in evaluating educational and community programs (i.e., improving student performance; reducing student drug use; reducing community garbage production). Theory-driven evaluations, as opposed to method-driven evaluations, focuses on the concepts and assumptions behind the prevention and/or intervention programs to be implemented. Theory-driven evaluation provides an in-depth look at what is going on within the intervention that may contribute toward the program's success or demise. It is these crucial assumptions that should drive the evaluation design that assesses program effectiveness. In order to understand what makes a program successful, it is necessary to know what these chains of events are that contribute toward the success of such a program. The only way to know what these events are is to research them and to draw conclusions based upon these results.

Domitrovich and Greenberg (2000) noted this lack of attention to implementation efforts when reviewing 34 programs determined to be effective in a recent review conducted by the Prevention Research Center for the Center for Mental Health Services. In addition, Edwards and Mullis (2004) note that the lack of generalizability of skills children learn with social skills curricula decreases their use and effectiveness in the classroom and on the playground. To understand what it is that contributes toward the successful implementation of effective social skills and other prevention programs, it is necessary to look at the in-depth processes involved in the implementation efforts. With this understanding comes an increased chance for schools to achieve successful outcomes with their prevention/intervention efforts.

Chen (1998), in discussing theory-driven evaluations of educational programs, stresses that a lack of contextual information about an educational program can prove to be misleading. For example, if the effectiveness of using a social skills/violence prevention curriculum such as *Second Step* is found to be insufficient, it could be the contexts of its teaching that could be ineffective, and not the curriculum itself. Since the assumptions underlying a program are key to understanding its evaluation of effectiveness, the nature, meanings, and concepts related to these assumptions need to be discussed in detail. The eight implementation themes discovered in this study provide process information about the implementation of *Second Step*.

Chen (1998) discusses his conceptual model of interactive domains that influence this implementation process. This model will be used to organize the eight interacting themes found in this study. These three domains are: (a) the implementation system (i.e., process and structure of the implementation and training system), (b) characteristics of

the implementer (e.g., teacher and school staff) and (c) characteristics of the setting in which the program is implemented (e.g., school climate, principal support, and district support). Chen notes that these domains not only affect the implementation process, but the outcome effectiveness of the program as well. These interactive domains that contribute to the implementation process provide potentially valuable information that will assist in implementing effective prevention and intervention programs in education. Figure 1 below depicts this process.

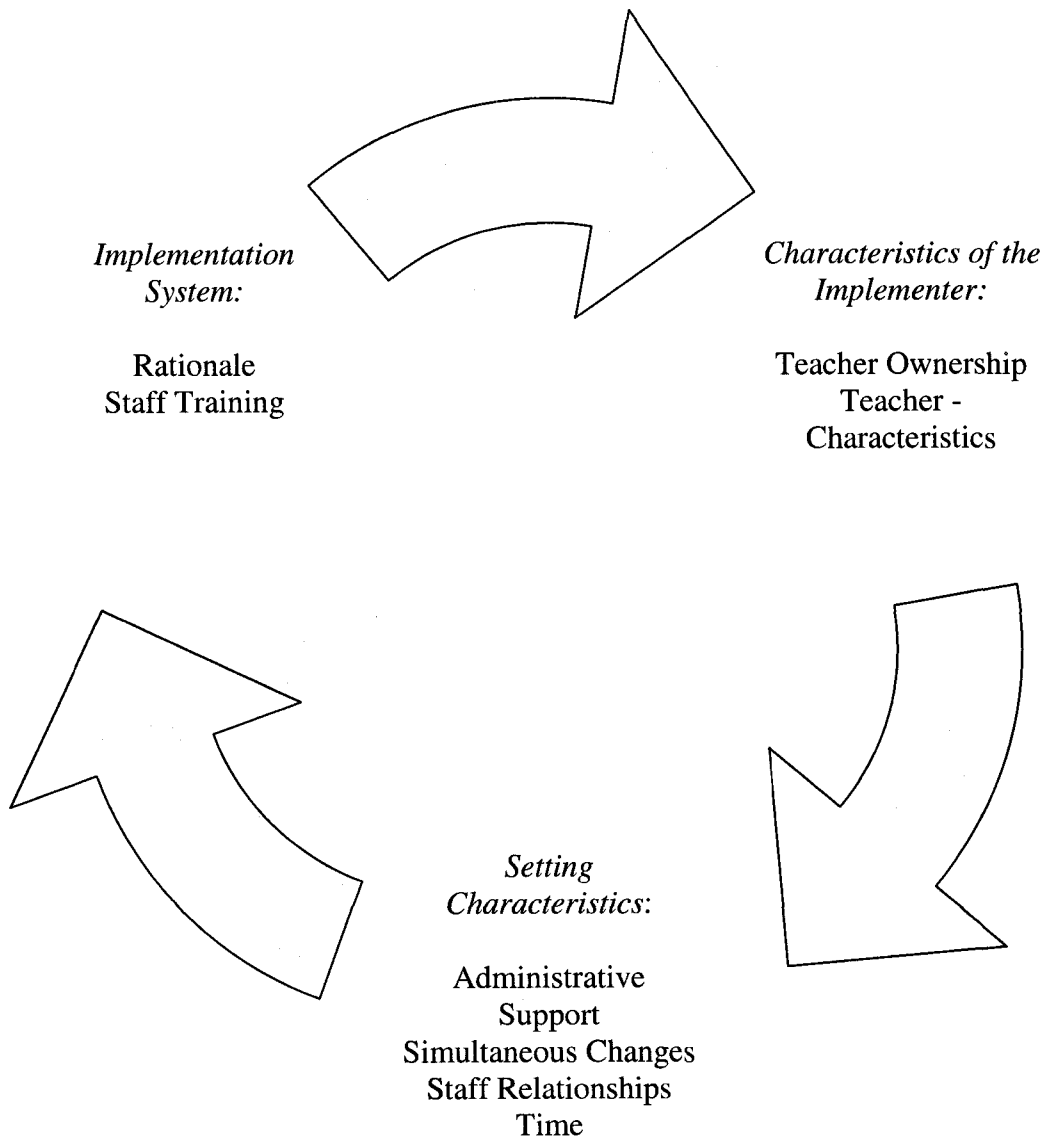


Figure 1: Adaptation of Chen's conceptual model that assists as an organizational tool in integrating the eight themes found in the implementation process.

Adaptation of Chen's Conceptual Model of Implementation

Implementation System

Staff training and *rationale* are themes found in this study that fit within Chen's *Implementation System* characteristic. In this study, both School A and School B principals were supportive of the staff training required for the implementation of *Second Step*. This training consisted of a two hour session led by the school counselor at each school. Additionally, the principals at each school approved professional leave for staff training that was provided through the grant that provided the *Second Step* curriculum (i.e., Children's Trust Fund Commission). This training provided substantial support and expertise for teachers to go back to their schools and train other teachers how to teach the *Second Step* curriculum. Though the two hour staff training was set aside at each school for the school counselors to train the remaining staff, upon reflection of comments made by participants, it possibly would have been more beneficial to have had peer teachers do this, or at least have peer led staff training in addition to the counselor led training. This is in agreement with the kind of professional development that Fullan (2001) says will sustain change. Taking some of the additional staff training recommendations made by the participants interviewed might make the training more pertinent. Such recommendations as having videos play on the whole circuit television station during staff development days, allowing teachers time to observe their peers while teaching *Second Step*, and checking with teachers after staff training to be sure they feel confident in teaching it would add to the quality of training

In addition to the above, some teachers noted they had not been sufficiently prepared, and that they felt the curriculum had just been thrown at them. Others preferred

more specific direction in the use of the curriculum. It was also mentioned that if the rationale had been better explained during the staff training, they would have been more consistent in its implementation. It also appeared that staff training may have been influenced to a degree by the work experience of the facilitator, and that more planning around the staff training component could be one area that would enhance the implementation.

In this study, the theme of *rationale* appeared to have a major influence on teacher motivation. Teachers mentioned that because they believed in the goals of the *Second Step* curriculum (i.e., decrease aggressiveness, and increase social skills and problem solving skills). Some stated that it would have been more helpful if the research already done on the effectiveness of *Second Step* had been presented more strongly during the staff training. Note the following quotes:

I had read about the overarching goals of the project to prevent dropout, to prevent violence and to reduce discipline problems. And the *Second Step* has those same goals but with a focus... (Administrator, School A)

I think it would be more effective to talk to a teacher about why it's important to help your children learn these skills first. (Teacher 1, School B)

In general, a clearer understanding of the rationale for teaching *Second Step* would improve its chances of successful implementation. Those teachers who stated the importance of students being able to peacefully solve their problems, despite possible negative influences from their homes appeared to offer the most support for teaching *Second Step*.

Characteristics of the Implementer. The implementer as described in Chen's model (Chen, 1998), is described as those who would be responsible for the actual

implementation, such as the teachers and other school staff (i.e., school counselor as program facilitator). Because teachers are the ones in charge in the classrooms, what they actually do is what makes the difference in the implementation process (Barth, 1990). *Teacher ownership* is a theme that arose in this study which describes if and how a teacher adapted the *Second Step* curriculum into their weekly schedule and into their philosophy of classroom management. Teacher creativity (i.e., expanding the use of *Second Step* to other school activities) appeared to influence this ownership demonstrated by the teachers in various ways. For example, such things as creating a writing journal, role playing at recess, and assigning room mediators to assist peers in solving real life problems on a talking porch outside the classroom were all demonstrations of teacher initiatives developed to encourage the skills of *Second Step*. Note the quotes below that demonstrate this creativity and ownership:

And they enjoyed the chance to stand up in front of the group and role play. And that's probably their favorite part of the program. (Teacher 1, School B)

...I can be teaching reading while I'm teaching about empathy, and I can be teaching writing while we do conflict resolution, you and your friend had an argument, you're going to write your friend a note to try to apologize for what's happened to try to work things out. (Teacher 1, School B)

In addition, some teachers demonstrated ownership by using the *Second Step* skills in classroom meetings.

Another theme that arose within the domain of *Characteristics of the Implementer* was *teacher characteristics*. Such individual teacher characteristics as being open to change, being flexible toward new ideas, or preferring lots of direction and structure in

adapting to change were traits that appeared to influence how these educators adapted to the implementation process. Note the following quotes:

...I cover some of the information from *Second Step* because I do that anyway...as a natural part of my classroom environment. (Teacher 1, School B)

It perfectly fits on a weekly basis or more than once a week, teaching it as a social studies topic. It's just right. (Teacher 3, School A)

You know the anger management one (lesson) – there are three lessons in a row between anger triggers, calming down, and then resolving the conflict; I think...but I have the kid just do a little two-column chart for each of those. They have to come up with two examples. (Teacher 3, School A)

Additionally, characteristics of the program facilitator, or school counselor, in each school appeared to influence the implementation process. Differences in length of career as school counselor, in knowledge and experience with *Second Step*, length of time at her particular school site, and past career experience in education could account for the differences in staff training offered at each school. These teacher characteristics are listed under the domain of *Characteristics of the Implementer* in Chen's model (Chen, 1998).

Maybe what can be so discouraging about the implementation process, is that so much of what influences the process is out of the program facilitator's (i.e., school counselor's) control. The program facilitator, by nature of coordinating and directing the implementation process, is very much interested in its success. Unfortunately, others may not feel the same way. Ideally, getting "buy-in" from those involved ahead of time, perhaps by some of those actions mentioned above, would help increase school and district ownership.

Characteristics of the Setting. Chen (1998) uses *Characteristics of the Setting* to discuss the interacting components of a setting that influence change within that setting.

Processes such as relationships between the participants and the influence of local and district administrators are two examples. In this model *Characteristics of the Setting* includes the following themes found in this study: *administrative support, simultaneous school and district changes, time, staff relationships* and *time*. These themes address such items as school climate, principal support, and school and district support. Of the themes mentioned in this domain, *administrative support* appeared to carry the most influence on the implementation process. This is in agreement with Fullan's description of most change that happens within a school (2001). *Administrative support* was indicated to be a significant theme found in the interviews. It appeared that without sufficient administrative support, implementation would be greatly hampered. This is most likely due to the numerous factors at a school that are under the principal's control. Such issues as designating financial support for additional curriculum kits and staff training, allocating time for such priorities as conducting classroom meetings, or teaching *Second Step* curriculum have a major impact on the environmental support provided to a setting for the implementation process.

Historically this small school district had not allocated monies into each school's counseling department, nor into the district's counseling agenda. Therefore, curriculum kits, additional posters, and staff training had to be funded by other resources. Had financial assistance not been obtained through grants from the Children's Trust Fund Commission, a State Initiation Grant, and Georgia Healthcare Foundation, there would not have been enough curriculum kits to implement *Second Step* in both schools.

Simultaneous school changes are major school and district changes that are going on at the time of the implementation effort. These changes require personal energy,

financial and staff resources, and adjustment to established routines. Simultaneous changes appeared to affect the amount of pressure and stress administrators and teachers felt. It appeared that the implementation of *Second Step* was sometimes experienced as “just one more thing to do”. In this study, simultaneous changes being made were: establishing schools of choice, building new school buildings, reallocating staff, and incorporating a growing population of Latino/a students into the schools. In addition, these changes were initiated and carried out under new leadership (i.e., new superintendent and assistant superintendents), and under the direction of principals who were serving as principals for the first time (i.e., School A and B principals). All of these changes required time and energy from the administrators, and one could speculate that these changes were seen as priorities above that of implementing *Second Step*.

Additional themes that arose under Characteristics of the Setting are *staff relationships* and *time*. *Staff relationships* were perceived by the school counselors at each school to have an impact on the implementation of *Second Step*. This appeared to be true due to pressure the staff felt implementing another change. Being sensitive to this pressure, the counselors and administrators strove to encourage implementation, while not expecting perfection. Generally, staff at both schools thought their relationships were positive, trusting, and strong enough to withstand change. Yet, as mentioned earlier, there was an awareness of some competition among staff. It could be that those interviewed actually felt more negatively than expressed, but due to this author being a participant observer in the school district, they may have not wanted to share this negative information.

The last characteristic to be discussed under *Characteristics of the Setting* is *time*. *Time* was stressed by most of those interviewed as being a major factor. Having been a teacher myself, this author could easily identify with the time pressure felt by the teachers and administrators. *Time*, or the lack thereof, was of particular importance to the educators given the pressure they felt to teach the changing professional standards mandated by the state, meet all the guidelines laid out by the No Child Left Behind Act 2001 (Public Law No. 107-110, 2002), follow the guidelines of the pre/post testing that was required by this district, and participate in the ongoing training and creation of new curriculum that was required by the certification program of *International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program* (School A) and *Multiple Intelligences* (School B). At times, this author perceived hesitancy from her own principal to enforce the implementation of *Second Step* due to the pressure she personally felt. The following quote demonstrates these ideas.

...the biggest (barrier) to me is the time factor...(it) is because of the emphasis that nationally they're putting on that achievement score.
(Administrator, School A)

Unless you provide that (*Second Step*) as a separate teacher, it's almost impossible to fit that on top of your reading, writing, spelling... (Teacher 1, School B)

One can see how this emphasis on test scores and teacher accountability influences educators and their receptiveness toward anything that does not appear to directly increase test scores. When this author, as program facilitator and counselor at School A monitored where teachers were in the process of teaching *Second Step* (i.e., through scope and sequence sheets, talking to them, observing lessons), the mention of *time* would frequently be a part of the conversation. In addition, as mentioned earlier in

simultaneous school changes, teachers would often express frustration as to how or when they would be able to “fit *Second Step* in”. It did appear, though, that one or two teachers did not perceive teaching *Second Step* as a difficult thing to find time for, and one wonders if individual teacher characteristics account for this difference.

In addition, the principal from School B noted that many requests from the community to present their valuable, yet time-consuming programs (i.e., Bike Safety) is another pressure she felt. Notice the following quotes made by the respondents on the theme of *time*:

And that’s... the biggest (factor). But that time priority is because of the emphasis that nationally they’re putting on that achievement score.
(Administrator, School A)

I just talked with one of my fifth grade teachers who was a very strong advocate of *Second Step*. And I said, well, are we doing it (teaching *Second Step*)? And she said there’s no time. I said why? She said because Spanish, and going out to ESOL, and going to speech, and focusing on the pre and post tests (locally mandated). And the pressure of just getting the children up to where they need to be. There isn’t time. (Administrator, School B)

Time appeared to be a major influencing theme that affected the implementation process. The lack of time, or the sense that there was never enough time, due to local and state mandates created a real difficulty that teachers and administrators often spoke about.

Interactions Across Themes. The adaptation of Chen’s model (1999), as shown in Figure A, depicts how the eight interacting themes influence each other. The themes found in the *Implementation System* interact with the themes found in the other two domains, *Characteristics of the Implementer*, and *Characteristics of the Setting*. All three domains interact in a circular manner as shown by the diagram. This could be seen as a discouraging factor in the implementation process, since there are so many interactions

with which to attend. Yet, these interactions could also be seen as opportunities to positively intervene and influence other factors in the implementation process.

For example, when looking at the themes of rationale and staff training under the *Implementation System*, the theme of rationale is seen to be affected by the theme of staff training. As mentioned previously in discussing these eight themes, participants commented that their understanding of the rationale for teaching *Second Step* impacted their consistency and implementation efforts in teaching the curriculum. Staff training interacted with rationale because it was during the staff training that the rationale was presented. Some teachers noted they did not fully comprehend the rationale behind teaching the curriculum, or understand the proven effectiveness of the curriculum as it was offered during the staff training. Additionally, the theme of time interacted with rationale because of the lack of time participants felt they could allocate to teaching the curriculum, and if they did not clearly understand the rationale for teaching it, they felt they could not justify taking the time. For future recommendations, participants requested a clearer explanation of the rationale and effectiveness research be given in future staff trainings.

Staff training also interacted with administrative support because it was up to the administrators as to when and how long the staff training was to take place. In this example, both administrators supported the participants in taking professional leave in order to attend an intense training provided by the creators of *Second Step*. Additionally, money for the staff training, as well as the curriculum kits, would have required administrative support, had it not been supplied by a grant.

Another recommendation given this author regarding staff training was that the counselors (i.e. program facilitators) needed to collaborate with one another. It appeared that the individual characteristics of the counselors (i.e., length of professional experience in a school setting; familiarity with the *Second Step* curriculum; understanding of the research base of the curriculum; experience with planning staff trainings), affected the staff training offered. These individual characteristics of the counselors interacted to affect the staff trainings, which in turn, affected the preparedness the teachers felt toward teaching the curriculum.

Teacher characteristics, as well as counselor characteristics mentioned above, are included under *Characteristics of the Implementer*. These characteristics influenced if and how teachers “owned” the *Second Step* curriculum. Such characteristics as being open to change, needing little or much guidance and structure in teaching the curriculum, teacher philosophy of educating children and managing their behavior, and personal social skills level of the teachers were mentioned by participants as influencing their efforts at implementation. This, therefore, interacted with teacher ownership. In addition, the characteristic of teacher creativity appeared to affect how the participants infused the curriculum into the daily lives of their students, also influencing teacher ownership.

In looking at *Characteristics of the Setting*, there were many interactions between the themes in this domain, as well as between themes in the other domains.

Administrative support appeared to interact with every theme except personal teacher characteristics. Administrative support interacted with staff training by influencing the time and resources allocated for the staff training that prepared teachers to teach *Second Step*. School A and B each had a two-hour staff training at the beginning of the

implementation process, but whether or not additional training was conducted for the staff throughout the school year relied totally upon whether the principal allocated time to do so. At School A, the amount of time allocated to train staff via faculty meetings and “stay late” staff days decreased over time. This appeared to be due to the focus and intense pressure the school was under as certification for becoming an International Baccalaureate Academy. Even though the understanding of the rationale behind teaching *Second Step* appeared to be important to the administrators at School A and B, the overriding pressure on the administrators to increase student test scores appeared to have more influence. This time pressure, then, interacted with administrative support of staff training, which as mentioned earlier, interacted with teacher ownership.

Administrative support appeared to be greatly influenced also by the many simultaneous changes that were going on in the school district at the time of the implementation effort. Creating schools of choice, becoming principals for the first time, faculty switching schools to meet schools of choice requirements, managing the great number of Latino students coming into the schools, and the creation of new curriculums for the schools of choice and the new state standards were all changes going on at the time of this implementation effort. Additionally, administrators were required to prioritize student achievement, with the initiation of pre and post tests in all academic areas as one of the results. A new superintendent and assistant superintendent were initiating these changes, which took time and energy from the administrators at Schools A and B. The administrators’ focus on these many new changes affected how they supported the implementation of *Second Step*.

Even though the principals had good intentions and voiced support for the implementation of *Second Step*, ambivalence was often seen in what was actually carried out. For example, the recommendation that teachers teach the curriculum at a set time during the school week was no longer stressed or supported. Actually, opposite comments were made by the principals, such as stating aloud to this author that they doubted if teachers had enough time to teach the curriculum.

These conflicts of interest and priorities created tension that affected the relationships between counselors and administrators. It also affected participants, as they commented about needing direct support from their administrator for the teaching of *Second Step*. These participants noted that they felt intense pressure to focus all their efforts on academic activities, and tended to feel guilty taking time to conduct classroom meetings or teach *Second Step*. Even though initial support from the administrators was mentioned at the beginning of implementation, as time passed and more changes took place in the school (i.e. establishing schools of choice, initiation of pre and post tests), administrators put most of their focus on these new simultaneous changes. Teachers felt guilty for taking time to teach the social skills/violence prevention curriculum, and decreased the number of lessons taught over time.

This leads to the theme of time. Administrators felt like their time was continually being encroached upon. They voiced that they had to very carefully decide what community agencies could come into the school, even though all the agencies had good programs to offer (i.e. Bike Safety). In addition, administrators were in the process of implementing all the simultaneous changes mentioned above, and this affected the amount of time they had for other priorities. This shortage of time also affected whether

or not counselors were allowed to present periodic staff training, as mentioned above, or give booster sessions on conducting classroom meetings. Shortage of time also interacted with the administrative support given the teachers to teach the curriculum. As mentioned earlier, there appeared to be ambivalence felt by the administrators in supporting the teachers in teaching the curriculum.

Similarities and Differences Between School A and School B. Some similarities and differences exist between the two schools studied. *Simultaneous changes* were happening in both schools. School A (where the implementation of *Second Step* originated) had a new principal (Administrator, School A) and a new assistant principal. Upon the original principal's retirement, the principal who replaced her began implementation processes that would lead to this school being certified as an International Baccalaureate, Primary Years Program. This certification is an extensive and in-depth process, and therefore, required much of the principal's time, energy, and money. School B's principal, likewise, began her career as principal at School B. Similarly, she was attempting to create a "school of choice" using the Multiple Intelligences of Howard Gardner (2004). Much focus, energy, and resources was required by each of these principals to implement these "schools of choice".

Staff training was conducted in each of these schools in a similar manner. Principals appeared to support the staff training and implementation of *Second Step*, while simultaneously having ambivalent feelings about requesting this from their teachers. In addition, some from School B requested more assistance with the staff training.

Another way School A and School B differed was in their use of classroom meetings. Classroom meetings (Edwards & Mullis, 2004) encourage peace and connection in the classroom and provide environmental support that allows students to solve real classroom problems. Classroom meetings allow the skills taught through *Second Step* to be generalized to students' day-to-day interactions with one another, and to expand them to recess, lunch, and other unstructured times. In addition, they provide the needed environmental support recommended by Trickett (as cited in Meyers and Nastasi, 1999) that helps students maintain the personal, social, and other supportive skills they have learned. School A's principal would regularly ask staff to hold classroom meetings to decrease minor and major behavioral interruptions that detracted from learning. Though this was true, teachers said they would have preferred she had set aside a set time each school week to hold these meetings.

School B's principal focused mainly on the instruction of *Second Step* as opposed to the additional use of classroom meetings to solve classroom problems. Though this principal was familiar with the concept and practice of classroom meetings from her experience as a former assistant principal in School A, this author believes it was because of the focus on the emerging school of choice that the use of classroom meetings at School B was limited. Additionally, the principal from School A had participated in staff training on classroom meetings at School A, conducted by a professor from a major southeastern university. One teacher, who had transferred from School A to School B, and who had previously used classroom meetings, continued to do so, and encouraged her peers to do so. The following quotes demonstrate:

Real quick (after school began) I started with the class meetings on the Friday. And I was set...I started the first week of school. (Teacher 2, School B)

Oh, throughout – whenever there’s a problem – throughout the whole week, and then when problems have come up in classroom meetings, we start and we pass. Everybody holds something, which seems to make them more comfortable to talk... Anyway, we sit in a circle, and like, the first time we go around everybody can give a compliment or share something. And it’s really sweet when we share like, “I’m going to Wal-Mart tomorrow. And everybody smiles, that’s nice”. (Teacher 1, School A)

Another similarity was the fact that teachers, administrators, and counselors in each school believed the lack of *time* was a major contributing factor to the implementation of *Second Step*. Each felt pressure from someone else to regularly be focusing on accountability, which amounted to focusing on students’ test scores.

Contribution to Literature

Studying the implementation process of a social skills/violence prevention curriculum such as *Second Step* is essential to ensure successful implementation. As Elias et al., (2003) and Domitrovich and Greenberg (2000) have demonstrated, most research based social emotional curricula fail at the point of implementation. More in-depth information is needed about the implementation process to encourage this process.

Committee for Children, a nonprofit organization that develops research based violence prevention curricula, has shown effective outcomes for the use of *Second Step* (Grossman et al., 1997). In addition, Taub (2001) showed positive results with 3rd and 6th graders being taught *Second Step*. Though this is an effective violence prevention curriculum, as was previously cited, most social emotional learning programs that are effective have difficulty with the implementation process. This study provides key factors that expand the literature base on successful implementation. By observing these findings

and informally assessing the factors that may get in the way of implementation, a school or school district is likely to increase their chance of successful implementation. Frey et al., (2000) note that well-designed programs alone are not enough. Schools and districts must allocate sufficient time and resources for the implementation to be successful. By following the guidelines that this in-depth information provides, success could be encouraged.

In addition to expanding the implementation literature on *Second Step*, this study further confirms the conceptual model by Chen (1998). Chen describes how the *implementation system, characteristics of the implementers, and setting characteristics* influence the implementation process. This study adds to Chen's model by discovering specific factors and their interactions that provide in-depth, contextual information necessary for successful implementation. One factor not mentioned by Chen, was the importance that simultaneous school and district changes hold in the implementation process. In this study, simultaneous school changes taxed the energy and resources of administrators and teachers. Administrators, teachers, and counselors all mentioned the numerous changes that were simultaneously taking place, and the anxiety and stress this caused.

Conclusion

In conclusion, successful implementation of a social skills/violence prevention curriculum is not easy. Many factors interact that can interfere with this process. There are several actions a school or school district can take to encourage successful implementation. These are listed below.

To improve chances of successful implementation, a school or district could assess the environment for the number of major changes that are currently being undertaken, and consciously decide how much of the implementation process to undertake, if any at that time. Although this suggestion is offered as possibly being helpful, it could also be seen as discouraging. If after assessment, one decides not to attempt the implementation, then, of course, no change would take place. Depending on the essentialness of the program being implemented, it could be beneficial to initiate the implementation, even though many changes may be simultaneously going on in the school or school district. One would at least be aware of the barriers she may be up against given this knowledge (i.e. awareness of a conflicting grant in another school).

Another suggestion would be to create a regularly scheduled means of communication between key administrators and program facilitators in order to insure administrative support. This can be a challenge. Because administrators are extremely busy, it is often very difficult to meet with them. Some ways to work around this may be to set aside an agreed upon time for the counselor to meet with the administrator on a regular basis. This would allow time for discussing items of concern, and for making plans regarding the implementation. Principals usually have more practice with implementation efforts, and counselors could benefit from their experience. In addition, it is essential in getting principals' "buy in" for any program that the counselor sees important to implement. By working closely with the principal, the counselor could also assist in accomplishing other similar objectives in the school that fit within the implementation program's objectives (i.e. School Improvement goal of reducing bullying).

Peer collaboration and peer led staff training needs to be a major part of the staff development. Peer led training appeared to be very important to those interviewed in this study. Peers who are familiar with the implementation program could assist in planning and leading the staff training. Arrangements could be made in grade-level teams, for example, for teachers to observe and train with one another. Also, teachers could share their creative ideas with each other in faculty meetings, grade-level meetings, in the school newspaper, and in casual conversations. In addition, teachers could form a committee to provide ongoing site support for the implementation effort. In addition, program facilitators need to collaborate in order to offer consistent, high-quality training between schools.

Finally, regularly planned staff-bonding activities need to be held throughout the school year. These activities would encourage trust and closeness between staff, and increase chances of cooperation. This could be planned by the program facilitator, and could be held during faculty meetings, staff training days, or pre and post planning days.

A limitation of this study is that it consisted of only two schools and a small percentage of educators. While it is probable that other schools could benefit from the lessons learned for successful implementation, these results cannot be generalized to other schools. It would be beneficial to extend this research to several schools and school districts in future studies.

Considering the above precautions when initiating an implementation process in a school or school district could enhance the program's success. Implementing programs that educate the whole child are worthy endeavors. Finding the most successful ways to implement programs is critical.

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Appendix A

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experience with teaching the *Second Step* curriculum to your students.
2. In what ways is it benefiting them? Are there ways in which the curriculum is not meeting your expectations.
3. What do you see as the purpose of the *Second Step* curriculum? What do you hope the use of this social skills/violence prevention curriculum will accomplish?
4. What are some of the things your students are learning? What evidence do you have that they are learning these things? Give some examples.
5. How did you get involved with the *Second Step* curriculum? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that process?
6. How did the school decide to get involved with this project? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this process? How would you do it differently?
7. What are your beliefs about the prevention of violence in schools?
8. What are your beliefs about the importance of children learning social/emotional skills?

9. What knowledge did you previously have about *Second Step* before becoming Involved with it?
10. What supports do you receive that are helpful to you in teaching *Second Step*?
What would you recommend to administrators and others who are encouraging teachers to use *Second Step* in the classroom?
11. What would help you in teaching *Second Step*?
12. What barriers do you see to the successful implementation of *Second Step* in your school?
13. What strengths exist in your school that will encourage the use of this curriculum?
14. What do you see as the purpose of teaching *Second Step* to your students?
15. What kind of training have you received to assist you in implementing this curriculum?
16. Have you changed schools and/or grade levels since last year? How has that affected you? How has that affected your implementation of *Second Step*?
17. Other factors often influence the effectiveness of a social skills/violence prevention curriculum. Some of these factors are: classroom meetings, in-school suspension procedures, and teachers' techniques in encouraging students to solve real problems. Which of the above do you use, and explain how they support or don't support the use of the curriculum.
18. Is ownership important in school change? If so, how?

Appendix B

Administrator and Counselor Interview Questions

1. How did you become involved with the use of *Second Step*? Describe this process.
2. How clear is the purpose of using *Second Step* to you? What do you hope it accomplishes?
3. What are your beliefs about a comprehensive prevention approach to violence in the schools?
4. What do you believe about children's social/emotional learning in the context of school?
5. What knowledge did you previously have about *Second Step* before becoming involved with it?
6. What barriers do you see to the successful implementation of *Second Step* in your school?
7. What strengths exist in your school that will encourage the use of this curriculum?
8. How has the staff been involved in getting trained for using *Second Step*?
9. What is your philosophy for creating change in a school? What constructs/components in a school facilitate change and the sustaining of change? Do you believe trust plays a part, and if so, how?
10. Is ownership important in school change? If so, how?

Appendix C

Additional Quotes Addressing the Eight Themes in the Implementation Process

Simultaneous School Changes

Administrator,
School B

Well, certainly this is our first year of implementation for multiple intelligences...

Administrator,
School B

Well, there certainly have been changes. When I first started designing this school, we were all asked to recruit teachers with the programs. And so the teachers that are at School B had chosen to be here. Because of choice, among the faculty primarily, few exceptions and the children with 100% choice, the parents have chosen to be here.

Administrator,
School B

The culture has totally changed...

Administrator,
School B

And then, we're moving in that direction next year to continue with the government offices. We have student council and we have *Go Be a Mayor*, and we have adopted the name of *Smartville*, which is the brainstorm of the (multiple) intelligences idea. ... We took on as much as we could handle this year...

Staff Relationships

Counselor,
School B

...without a team approach to this, um, a lot of things won't succeed. You've got countries being, being formed you know, you have this, these people doing their own thing, and that's not a successful...?

Counselor,
School B

I'm thrilled with our team, we are.

Teacher 3,

The strengths are that this is a very close-knit faculty, despite

Some of the changes the past couple of years with shifting around teachers. The faculty is already close-knit. It's a family.

Staff Training

Teacher 1
School A

If someone else is doing it (teaching the curriculum), it's more likely to capture your sense that you could...too... (it's better than)...going to a big conference where you have a speaker that tells you this is the way to improve schools.

Teacher 1
School B

...and now that I have been forced to do it, I would do it, but, it will do it, but it would have been so much easier to have been shown this really works and let's show you why and let's tell you how this is going to help your students so that I would want to instead of feeling like I had to.

Administrator,
School A

I think sharing as often as you can how you think you can improve. And sharing openly. I want to do more of that because people don't – you get in your own eyes and you don't see what other people might see, and just the idea that someone has a concern or an idea of the way to make it better then begins to stirring a change, and sharing of ideas.

Counselor,
School B

(in response to the counselor asking them for quarterly updates)...It will encourage them. So each quarter we'll get them to...and I'll have a form created. And I'll just send it out and they'll need to complete it.

Teacher 2,
School B

And you know, ...I feel like...we enjoyed having you come in and show us some of the ways to do it first. At faculty meetings, you would show us how to do it, and I think that was good, and what, and then the book, was a book that you showed us. And I pretty much started using that, going step by step... how you would conduct a class meeting.

Teacher 1,
School B

I think the counselors need to meet together and have a planned program and be on the same page.

Administrator,
School A

She's still busy with SSTs. And Special Education problems, and getting our kindergarteners settled in. She's got to balance all that, and it's hard. She really would like to be doing the guidance in the classrooms, and she will be. But right now, she is inundated with the 125 kindergarteners and the 75 new students, many of

whom are transients. Lots of transient families.

Rationale

Administrator,
School B

We certainly see a lot of problems. Parents who have anger management problems, who don't know how to problem solve. Who don't understand conflict resolution, and who will probably never see a counselor unless it's court ordered or government provided. So, in that respect, what better job could we do in the public school is (than) to provide that training. And it really needs to be done. Because if we can train them with that process from an early age, then I think it can make a difference all the way up.

Teacher 2,
School A

Well, I think, I think because if we grow up and you only see, like your mom hit your dad...if that's the only thing you see, that's what's normal to you.

Teacher 3
School A

And then...it helped...a great deal...showing us the research behind how it works.

Teacher 2
School A

You know...I believe in this cause (because) ...their parents aren't telling them this.

Ownership

Teacher Ownership Expressed Through An Encouraging Classroom Environment

Teacher 1, School A

It's not just a specific once a week thing. I try to refer to it all week long, and it's been very beneficial...

Teacher 1, School A

(in explaining how she may not always teach the lessons, but includes them in their school life). We were all together on the rug so we were working together and I said now everyone stop for a minute. I want everyone to look at ___...-her face. How do you think they're felling?

Teacher 3, School A ...for me, I took it as an assumed that I needed to teach it. So, I took ownership of it...I just simply thought, you know what, there needs to be a character ed program, that is it. So I took ownership of it. *Second Step* is being implemented by using class meetings, and solving class problems.

Ownership Expressed Teacher Through Consistency

Teacher 3,
School A I always teach it during social studies, because it's just that.

Teacher 3,
School A It perfectly fits on a weekly basis, or more than once a week teaching it as a social studies topic.

Teacher Ownership Depicted Through Extended Learning Opportunities

Teacher 2
School A And we write in journals a lot. And I talk about – like with our literature we read Freddy Devincy, who has a dad who's in jail, and there's a gang running around and stuff like that.

Teacher1
School B And we talk a lot about those things and you know like I said at the teachable moment, when we're on the rug and someone makes a mistake, and somebody else laughs. We stop and say, now would you like someone to laugh at you when you make a mistake? Well, of course not. Well, should we laugh at someone else? We need to apologize to our friends and make sure they feel okay because we have to know its okay to make mistakes in school. If we knew everything, we wouldn't need to come.

Teacher 3
School A After the first year of doing *Second Step*, I sat down for a couple hours, pulled out the cards, glanced over what I had already taught by that point, so I was a little familiar with the lessons. I glanced over the concepts, and the key concepts, and I wrote down a number of questions. I still wanted to come up with five per week, so that a teacher would have one for every day of the week...it would be a daily oral language activity...

Teacher 3 The *Compliment Lesson*, I would say, what's the best compliment you've ever received? And then a different question is, the best compliment you've ever given? and I'll have them expand on that. I'll have them talk about maybe who they gave it to, what...and this is just a little ten-minute activity per day during reading class.

School A

Teacher Characteristics

Teacher 1, ... It's really...my favorite time of the week. Other teachers
School A don't feel that way...

Teacher 1 ...just that because it's so natural for me, it's hard for me to
School A understand why people struggle with it...I am much more
oriented toward behavior type things or personalities.

Teacher 3 ...it's not like I was doing it against my will.
School A

Teacher 1 Well, I think just the fact that I really believe in it, and I'm
School A excited to do it. So, I don't ever have hesitancy about doing it...I
don't really need a motivator.

Teacher 1 I think that a teacher that is more academically minded does not
School A readily understand how 30 minutes a week transfers to
everything that happens in the classroom. Whereas to me, that's
just basic psychology in being able to see that.

Administrator I do remember hearing that (that the parents should be teaching
School B these skills to their children) and the parents should be doing
that. And as teachers, um... have more experience with working
with high poverty, um children, they begin to see that for
whatever reason the parents are not capable and/or not available
and/or not even present to do the parenting that you would think
should be done in a middle class or an upper class home.

Time

Teacher 1 ...it's been such a busy beginning of school and we've got a new
School B reading program that I'm piloting in my classroom, and we've
been very busy, and it is consuming a lot of time...

Teacher 1 The only drawback I see is we have so much instruction...that we
School B have to give priority .

- Teacher 1
School B I like the program. I just need more time, time of day.
- Teacher 1
School B I find it's hard for me to add something else.
- Teacher 2
School B You have your CRCT, you have all of your requirements to push down you, and of course see this is the first year we have done the pre/post test to help us get ready for this, which is fine, it all worked out fine in fact we did well and the children were just so in on it. But there has to be a balance because you get them coming from second to third and they're babies.
- Administrator
School B ...well, I, you, know, one barrier is this whole time, education, the time in classroom, you know you are vying for the educational time because of that test that has to be done in the Spring. I mean curriculums change so teachers are scrambling to say, ok, I've gotta meet this criteria, then okay, the test is coming. You don't want to be in needs improvement, & you throw all that into the mix, and then you get a new teacher whose a 1st year teacher. It's just overwhelming for the teacher.
- ...the biggest (barrier) to me is the time factor. But that time priority is because of the emphasis that nationally they're putting on that achievement score.
- Administrator
School B ...we have extended the school day by 15 min. which will make you think you've got more time for special programs. In essence, we are still in just as much a crunch for time as we ever were, for 2 reasons. 1st, and unbeknownst to most teachers, the curriculum is totally changing...
- Administrator
School B The pressure of testing has never been greater. Teaching to the test and making sure the children are totally prepared...
- Teacher 1
School A The most prevalent barrier is time...we carefully monitor the amount of time students are spending in Reading and Math...it's hard to justify (teaching *Second Step*)...you have to have the (administrative) support in order to prioritize your time to do something like *Second Step*.
- Administrative Support*
- Administrator
School B I think Dr.____ our (past) superintendent was a (university X) alumni.

Teacher
School A

I think that...what I think is if they don't...if the principal doesn't really buy in... then you're not gonna make it important.

Counselor
School B

We did our training...and she (principal) said you have to go...

Teacher 1
School B

...because there is so much accountability in their academic performance, although we as teachers know that their (students) ability to work together and cooperate and resolve conflict...is important...because academics are pushed so hard we have to make that our first priority...so other things...are pushed to the wayside.