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Implementing Social Emotional Learning with Fidelity: A School Improvement Plan

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Implementing Social Emotional Learning with Fidelity: A School Improvement Plan

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Capstone Project: A School Improvement Plan

Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa

Abstract

Research findings indicate social emotional learning can have a positive impact on both teachers and students. Social emotional learning not only improves the social emotional well-being and competence in teachers and students, it can also benefit students academically. When students do not have access to social emotional learning instruction consistently, it can have a poor impact on both their behavior and academics. With research findings in mind, a school improvement plan was created to research, purchase, and implement a new social emotional learning curriculum with fidelity. The goal of this plan is to increase the fidelity in social emotional learning instruction, decrease problem behaviors, and improve literacy and math scores.

Keywords: social emotional learning, implementation, fidelity, behavior, well-being

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Implementing Social Emotional Learning with Fidelity: A School Improvement Plan

Social emotional learning is an important part of education and human development (CASEL, 2023). Evidence-based SEL interventions are an important part of safe, supportive, and academically productive learning environments (Schwartz et al., 2022). Although the research and evidence are clear, there is still a lack of social emotional learning taking place in our schools. CASEL is a leading organization known for its academic research in social emotional learning. In 2018, CASEL conducted a survey for teachers and principals to report on the implementation of SEL programs at their schools. This survey showed only 34% of teachers and 52% of principals reported implementation of an SEL program in elementary schools (Schwartz et al., 2022). To help this problem, CASEL launched the Collaborative Districts Initiative (CDI) to support districts in implementing high-quality SEL in large, urban districts across the United States (Schwartz et al., 2022). In 2021, with the CDI model in effect, the same survey was conducted, showing an increase of 26% for teachers and 29% for principals (Schwartz et al., 2022).

The problem is students are not receiving adequate instruction in the area of social emotional learning because many districts are pushing for more academic success, even though academic success cannot be obtained until students are confident in their abilities to regulate their emotions, persevere through social and emotional problems, and have overall confidence in themselves. When looking at the latest data from the National Conference of State Legislature, in 2017-2018 around 30% of children in the United States experienced one adverse childhood experience (National Conference of State Legislature, 2022). The same data also showed around 14% of children experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences (National Conference of State Legislature, 2022). It is also estimated around 25% of children have experienced a traumatic event at some point during their childhood (Scott et al., 2021). Due to these alarming statistics, it is crucial students receive adequate, high-quality SEL instruction.

The purpose of this school improvement plan is to address the problem of implementation fidelity when it comes to social emotional learning in schools. This plan will focus on adopting and implementing a new social emotional learning curriculum in hopes to decrease referrals and problem behaviors, while

increasing student attendance and academic achievement. The plan will look at the benefits and different approaches to SEL curriculums, along with the importance of using SEL curriculums with fidelity. The information from this plan will utilize data from multiple sources to recommend the use of a social emotional learning curriculum to help improve the climate of the school, student behaviors, learning, and instruction.

The articles used for this paper are peer reviewed articles or journals and are located at the DeWitt Library from Northwestern College. All journals and articles have been written in the past 10 years. The journals and articles used had to contain the following topics to be used for this paper: social emotional learning, implementation fidelity, social emotional learning curriculums. The articles and journals for this paper have been limited to pre-k through middle school studies and research, with the majority landing in the pre-k through 5th grade area to best meet the needs of this plan. A total of twenty-two peer reviewed sources were chosen, following research, to best support the need of implementing a new social emotional learning curriculum with fidelity.

Programs intended to promote student social and emotional development are successful at promoting academic achievement, reducing conduct problems, improving prosocial behavior, and reducing emotional distress with high quality implementation (Dusenbury et.al., 2017). Evidence-based research shows that social emotional curriculums play a critical role in elementary school settings. When a research-based curriculum is adopted and implemented with fidelity, students become successful in both skills pertaining to social emotional learning and academic achievement.

The literature review will be broken down into four sections: the importance of social emotional learning, different types/approaches to social emotional learning, social emotional learning curriculums, and quality implementation. The literature review will discuss the benefits of social emotional learning, the different approaches of social emotional learning, different research-based social emotional learning curriculums, and how the quality and fidelity of implementation plays a part in social emotional learning.

Review of the Literature

The Importance of Social Emotional Learning

Durlak et. al. (2011) examined a meta-analysis of 213 studies involving the use of Social Emotional Learning programs. In the study there were 270,034 participants ranging from kindergarten through high school. Data was collected over a 20 year period. The study found when students had access to social emotional learning interventions and programs, the programs and interventions positively impacted their academic achievement, and their social-emotional competencies and attitudes about themselves, others, and the school they attended. Students that had access to these interventions and programs showed an 11-percentile gain in academic achievement. This supports the hypothesis that access to a social emotional learning curriculum can have a positive impact on student's academic achievement and social-emotional well-being.

Similar findings were also found in a study done in Melbourne, Australia within a preschool setting. White and Walker (2018) conducted a quantitative study for 8 weeks to examine the use of SEL resources and its effects on preschool children's social-emotional development. The resource program they were studying included features and skills such as emotional awareness, emotional self-regulation, behavioral self-regulation, friendship skills, and problem solving. White and Walker (2018) found a significant increase in scores when the students were given the Affect Knowledge Test (AKT). The AKT measures preschool children's receptive and expressive knowledge of emotion. White and Walker found the effect of the intervention and program was .81 for the students receiving the instruction, and .24 for the students in the control group that did not receive the instruction (2018). In other words, the findings from their study showed when research-based SEL strategies and resources are used in

the school setting, they have a positive impact on student's own awareness of their emotions and their ability to self-regulate.

Although there are many studies providing evidence of the positive impacts of social emotional learning, Wallender et. al. (2020) conducted a study to determine the difference between students perceived social-emotional competency levels when introduced to a formalized curriculum program versus students who were not introduced to a curriculum program. This study led to findings that showed a decrease between the pre and post-test scores. Overall, the students participating in this study decreased their awareness and knowledge skills by .12 points when comparing the data from the pre and post-tests (2020). Researchers were not sure of the reasons behind the decrease in scores after the curriculum was implemented. One hypothesis for the decrease could be students had more knowledge regarding their own self-regulation skills after the intervention, resulting in the opposite results researchers were looking for (2020).

While it is important to become familiar with the positive impacts social emotional learning has on student's, the teacher's implementing these interventions and curriculums play an important role as well. Waajid et. al. (2013) examined undergraduate students' experiences with social emotional learning during their semester of coursework. This study involved 15 participants who were all in their final year of a teacher preparation program. Many of the participants wanted to be elementary school teachers. The goal of the study was to help teach the undergraduate students social emotional learning can be infused with other parts of the school day, while also focusing on the importance of social emotional learning (2013). After the course the pre-service teachers spoke of their greater appreciation for social emotional learning. One student commented on the shift in the perception they had on social emotional learning stating, "I thought I would focus a lot of time on controlling the classroom, now I am learning that my

focus will be on helping children to control themselves” (Waajid et. al., 2013). Teachers must be on board and believe in social emotional learning to be able to implement the interventions and curriculums the way they need to be implemented in order to have a positive impact on student achievement both academically and emotionally.

Different Approaches to Social Emotional Learning

There are many different approaches to social emotional learning. Some of these approaches being very popular amongst the preschool and elementary settings, while others might not be as common. No students are exactly alike, so keeping this in mind when planning for social emotional learning is important. An approach that works for one classroom might not work for another, being both the beauty and the challenge of social emotional learning.

The importance of social emotional learning is evident within both teachers and their students to achieve success within their classroom. Lam and Wong’s (2017) study in Hong Kong examined the relationship between teachers’ competence in social emotional learning and the social-emotional well-being of children. The study involved 990 kindergarten students and 106 kindergarten teachers. This study approached social emotional learning with the teacher’s well-being first. Teachers were able to have access to opportunities that allowed them to gain new knowledge around social emotional learning and expand on their own personal growth and social emotional skills (2017). These opportunities allowed teachers to feel better prepared and more knowledgeable to be successful when it came to increasing their student’s social and emotional skills. The results of this approach showed a 3 unit increase in the average social competence scores of the students when comparing the pre and post-test data (2017). Data also indicated anxiety and anger scores decreased by 1.5-1.8 units after the students had access to the intervention program. This approach pointed out the importance of teacher learning and growth

in the area of social emotional learning. When teachers have the skills and are more prepared, they can support their students in the area of social emotional learning.

Although the importance and effectiveness of putting teachers' social emotional learning first is evident, there are also many other approaches when it comes to implementing social emotional learning in the classroom. Green et. al. (2019) conducted a study examining the effectiveness of an adapted small group social emotional learning curriculum. Rather than teaching social emotional skills within the large group setting, this study focused on whether the teaching would be more effective in a small group setting, supporting students most at need at the time. The study consisted of 137 kindergarten and first grade students referred to the program due to emotional and/or behavior concerns (2019). The teachers and students met in a small group about one time per week for 30-45 minutes. When comparing the Sutter-Eyberg Student Behavior Inventory pre and post-test data, there was a 1.69-point decrease in the intensity of problem behaviors and problem behaviors also decreased by 3.03 points after the students completed the intervention program (2019). This approach focused on targeted students needing more support with social emotional learning skills in a small group setting. This data and approach proves a small group setting provided to a school's at risk students could positively impact student behavior.

Along with a small group approach to social emotional learning, there are also situational factors and different types of strategies to be utilized. Siew and Bull (2018) explored the different types of situations that provide social emotional learning opportunities in the classroom, as well as the different types of strategies the teachers were using. This study was part of a larger study involving the Singapore Kindergarten Impact Project (SKIP). It involved 1,538 children between the ages of 4 and 5 years old (2018). Researchers observed classrooms to examine the

different types of strategies teachers used to facilitate social emotional learning in the classroom and their approach to the situations. Observational data showed that social emotional learning occurred more frequently during small group activities (2018). This supports Green et. al. (2019) and the effectiveness of social emotional learning in small group settings. Researchers also looked at the types of strategies the teachers used to facilitate social emotional learning in their classrooms. They found that 56% of the teachers used setting a positive tone to support student's social emotional development, while 25% of the teacher's used suggestion of solutions (2018). This study suggests there are multiple approaches to social emotional learning, and not every teacher will approach social emotional learning in the same way.

Traditional approaches, like the approaches mentioned, are usually common throughout classroom settings. One approach not seen often is the Visual Learning Analysis (VLA) approach. Whitmore et. al. (2019) conducted a study on Visual Learning Analysis and its relationship with social emotional learning. This study was done in a low-income area in Louisville, Kentucky. It included researchers, teachers, coaches, a preschool teacher, and a preschool classroom consisting of 4- and 5-year-old students (2019). The VLA approach used videos and photographs of lessons to allow teachers the opportunity to look back and reflect on the smaller parts of the lesson and what was happening in the classroom. It gave the teacher an opportunity to see the lesson and the students from a different angle or lens. This approach allowed teachers to see and reflect on the attributes of the student's social emotional learning, especially when it came to their concentration and confidence while learning (2019).

When thinking about student needs in the area of social emotional learning, it can be important for some schools and teachers to have flexibility in how they go about teaching social emotional skills in their classrooms. Bailey et. al. (2019) conducted a study to examine a

strategy-based approach to social emotional learning. This study compared the strategy-based approach to a scripted social emotional learning program. The study took place during a summer program in a low-income area, serving pre-k through eighth grade students (2019). The strategy-based approach allowed teachers more flexibility when thinking about what their students needed when it came to social and emotional skills. Different research-based strategies and interventions were utilized such as brain games, feeling circles, and conflict solvers (2019). Students rated the lowest by their teachers when it came to SEL scores showed the most growth with the strategy-based approach, showing growth of .46 points in six weeks (2019). Flexibility is not always an option when schools and districts choose to use more scripted social emotional learning curriculums. Programs offering more flexibility, or using a more strategy-based approach can benefit more students when thinking about meeting all of the students' needs in the classroom (2019).

Social Emotional Learning Curriculums

There are different approaches to social emotional learning, but there are also many different social emotional learning curriculums which utilize different approaches, strategies, and skills to meet the needs of students throughout their school careers.

Ashdown and Bernard (2012) examined the *You Can Do It! Early Childhood Education Program* (YCDI). Research for their study focused on the effects of the program in relationship to students' social emotional competence, well-being, and academic achievement compared to peers that did not receive instruction from the program. The goal of the YCDI program is for students to achieve positive, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes (2012). The program works towards this goal by focusing instruction on five key social emotional competencies which are: confidence, persistence, organization, getting along, and emotional resilience (2012).

Ashdown and Bernard's (2012) study consisted of 4 teachers and 99 students from two first grade classrooms and two pre-k classrooms in a low-income area in Melbourne, Australia. Data was collected by the teachers using the ACER Well-being Survey from the curriculum itself. Results from the pre-k data showed students receiving the intervention grew 6% in the area of social emotional well-being, almost 11% more than students in the control group who did not receive the intervention (2012). Post-test data results indicated students receiving the intervention instruction received a mean score of 96% on the post-test, while students in the control group received a mean of 85% on the post-test (2012). First grade results showed the same trend of growth, with first grade students growing by 5% in the area of social emotional well-being. First grade post-test results showed a mean score of 95% for the students receiving the intervention, while students in the control group had a mean score of 85% on the post-test (2012). These results provide positive information on the effects of the *You Can Do It* program after 10 weeks of intervention implementation.

Top et. al. (2016) researched the effects of the *Second Step* curriculum on student academic outcomes. The *Second Step* curriculum is both a SEL curriculum and a character development curriculum utilized to increase student's social and emotional competence while also preventing aggression and violence (2016). Some of the skills the curriculum focuses on are empathy, perspective, problem solving, self-control, and anger management. The research focused on the relationship between strong social emotional learning instruction and the impact of academic achievement. The study consisted of 5,189 students from fifth to eighth grade in a charter school system in Texas (2016). Researchers used student GPAs to compare the effects of the social emotional learning curriculum. Results showed growth in the GPAs of students receiving the intervention (2016). Students receiving the intervention grew from average GPAs

of 3.3 to almost 3.5 in four consecutive semesters (2016). Students who did not receive the intervention did not receive higher than a 3.3 GPA over the given time of the intervention (2016). This study provides evidence implementation of a strong social emotional learning curriculum like the *Second Step* curriculum can have a positive impact on students' academic achievement.

Student perceptions of school are important when it comes to their success in the classroom. When students do not feel welcome or comfortable at school, it is more likely they will not be as successful as they can be. Cline et. al. (2023) investigated the Responsive Classroom curriculum and its impact on student behavior. The Responsive Classroom curriculum works with student strengths and needs in order to help students build relationships and communication skills (2023). The study consisted of 4 elementary schools in Illinois and did not list detailed participant information (2023). Data was collected by using social-emotional behavior rubrics for each student, along with observation logs, surveys, and graphing of the rubric scores (2023). The curriculum focused on communication, community building, relationships, and goal setting (2023). From the data, major themes emerged leading to positive results from the use of the Responsive Classroom curriculum. Students began to feel like their classroom was a community, with 75% of students agreeing that because of the curriculum, their interactions with others were more respectful (2023). Not only did the curriculum help students feel better about school, 75% of the teachers reported their self-efficacy increased since implementing the Responsive Classroom curriculum (2023). This curriculum helped with student and teacher's overall feelings about school, allowing better communication and relationships.

Another type of program focusing on student's self-regulation skills involves the use of yoga. Bergen-cico et. al. (2015) looked at the impacts of using a mindful yoga program and its effect on student's self-regulation skills. The study focused on 144 sixth grade students with 72 students in the yoga program and 72 students in the control group (2015). The study took place over one full school year in Boston, Massachusetts. Students in the intervention group showed an increase of 3.23 points in total regulation skills by the end of the school year after being involved in the yoga program (2015). Students in the control group showed a decrease in skills, decreasing by 2.58 points at the conclusion of the school year (2015). After the program study, the teacher reported not only did the mindful practices help her students, they also helped her stay calm and focused throughout her day (2015). Students were also given the opportunity to provide feedback on the program. 83% of the students provided feedback on the program and their thoughts, with 60% of the students reporting the yoga helped them feel calm and concentrate on their schoolwork (2015). This study shows teaching students how to regulate their emotions by using different strategies can impact their overall well-being and ability to focus on academics.

One social emotional curriculum showing an increase in both social emotional skills and academic skills is the KoolKIDS program. Carroll et. al. (2020) researched the effectiveness of the KoolKIDS program regarding both social emotional competence and academic achievement. The study was conducted over a 14-week period in Queensland, Australia, with 854 total students ranging from fourth to sixth grade (2020). Students were given questionnaires regarding their own feelings towards their social emotional skills and their strengths and difficulties before and after the 14-week intervention. Overall, when looking at the data from the surveys, students in the intervention group showed a post-intervention mean score of 67.67, while students in the control group showed a mean score of 65.12 (2020). This data provides evidence of the 14-week

intervention helping students increase their social emotional competence. Researchers also looked at the academic data from the students in the intervention group. Students in the intervention group showed an increase in English and math, growing by over .10 points when comparing pre and post-test data (2020). The results of this study indicates the KoolKIDS program can be effective regarding student's social emotional skills and their academic achievement.

The last social emotional learning curriculum this review will discuss is the Fast Track PATHS curriculum. Bierman et. al. (2010) conducted a multi-year study on the role of this program on student's social emotional learning, involving students from the beginning of their first-grade year until the end of third grade. The study took place in three different states, in which all three locations were of low socioeconomic status (2010). Data was collected for two major categories which were authority acceptance and social competence problems (2010). Around 35% of students in high poverty areas had problems and struggles with authority acceptance who did not receive the intervention, compared to between 25-30% of students in the high poverty areas who did receive the intervention (2010). When looking at the low poverty areas, around 25% of students who did not receive the intervention had problems with authority acceptance, compared to less than 20% of students in the low poverty areas receiving the intervention (2010). When looking at social competence, more than 30% of students in high poverty areas who did not receive the intervention had social competence problems, compared to around 25% of the students receiving the intervention (2010). When looking at this area for low poverty students, around 20% of students struggled with social competence problems who did not receive the intervention, compared to less than 15% of students receiving the intervention (2010). The data from this study was split to show the outcomes from both students in high

poverty and low poverty areas, with both an intervention and control group for each area. The control group for both high and low poverty areas showed an increase in problems for authority acceptance and social competence problems compared to the group receiving the intervention. This data is evidence the intervention was working for student's exhibiting problems with authority acceptance and social competence.

Quality Implementation

Although it is important to find the right curriculum to meet student's needs, it is also important the curriculum or program is being implemented as it is supposed to be. Without quality implementation, these programs and curriculums may not give the results that they are intended to give.

Teachers often have a lot on their plates. Sometimes thinking about social emotional learning can feel like something extra that they must do, causing teachers to feel burnt out. Kim et. al. (2021) researched the impact of social emotional learning programs on teacher attitudes and burnout. Teacher outlook on behavior might impact how they teach social emotional learning skills in their classroom. Helping teachers look beyond the behaviors and understand the behavior that is happening is a great way to shift the paradigm of behavior, which could then lead to a new outlook on behavior (2021). Educators in Ontario were chosen to engage in training for MindUP, a social emotional learning program, as well as a trauma-informed practice training (2021). On top of the training before implementation, educators also formed focus groups meeting regularly to discuss the implementation of the programs in their classrooms (2021). Educators commented on their feelings towards the strong implementation of these programs, stating they feel greater success with the programs and have increased confidence in their capability to deliver what the programs have to offer (2021). Teachers were given the

Attitudes Related to Trauma-Informed Care (ARTIC) scale to assess the attitudes and feelings they had when it came to social emotional learning and trauma-informed care. When reviewing the data from the ARTIC scale, the scores had increased by .25 after teachers had taught and implemented the program for two full years (2021). When looking at the burnout results, scores on the survey decreased by .41 after one full year of implementation (2021). This data indicates how important it is for quality training before implementation and strong implementation can have positive effects on both students and teachers.

Rimm-Kaifman et. al. (2014) also looked at fidelity of implementation. The study examined the effects of the Responsive Classroom Approach on student's academic achievement along with the fidelity of implementation of the program (2014). 1,467 students received the intervention, while 1,437 students did not receive the intervention and were in the control group. The study took place in 24 diverse elementary schools in the U.S. and involved only students in third, fourth, and fifth grade. Training and coaching were done regarding the curriculum, as well as classroom observations to measure implementation and fidelity (2014). Researchers saw achievements in both reading and math when the curriculum was utilized and implemented with fidelity (2014). Results indicated being in a school practicing this approach resulted in a .44 gain in math and a .52 gain in reading (2014). This study shows fidelity of implementation is important and can lead to an increase in academic achievement.

Along with fidelity of implementation, looking into the follow up effects of social emotional learning is important as well. This can give researchers the opportunity to see if the instruction or intervention worked over longer periods of time. Taylor et. al. (2017) conducted a study looking at the effects of SEL interventions at follow up over a period of 18 years. This meta-analysis used data from other studies to determine the impacts and effects of follow-up

periods (2017). Students receiving the intervention showed an increase of 5% in the follow up study regarding their attitudes and social behavior (2017). They also showed a 12.93% increase in overall academic performance (2017). The students involved in these studies continued to demonstrate positive benefits following participation in a social emotional learning program or intervention (2017). When these intervention programs are used correctly, there can be lasting impacts on students and their achievements in school.

Another study looking into the impacts of implementation fidelity occurred in British Columbia. Kelm et. al. (2014) examined if an increase in PBIS implementation fidelity could relate to positive outcomes for student's behaviors, academic achievements, and school safety. There were 200 students involved in the study occurring over a two-year period. The first year of the study was done at partial implementation of the PBIS program, and the second year involved full implementation of the program (2014). The difference between partial and full implementation allows researchers to see the impact of full implementation and the effects it had on the students. During the first year of implementation the school had 518 occurrences of problem behavior resulting in referrals (2014). During the second year, the school had decreased this number to 252 occurrences of problem behavior (2014). The student's academic achievement also showed an increase of 44% in reading, 56% in writing, and a 25% increase in math. Implementing the program with fidelity and full participation led to an increase in academic achievement and a decrease in problem behaviors.

Fidelity of implementation can impact the quality of instruction and implementation of any curriculum or program. There are other factors that can impact the quality of implementation as well. Milkie and Warner (2011) studied the impacts of learning environments on children's mental health and behaviors at school. The study was conducted over one school year and

involved 16,373 students in first grade from 1,200 public and private schools in the United States (2011). Quality implementation goes hand in hand with resources in the classroom. Research showed when a classroom did not have adequate resources, it resulted in a .04 increase in a child's learning problem (2011). "A learning environment that reduces a teacher's ability to provide enriching experiences is associated with children's problems" (Milkie and Warner, 2011). Ensuring quality implementation for students also means ensuring the teachers and students have the resources they need to be successful when utilizing any curriculum or program. This study proves these two components are closely related and should be taken into consideration when thinking about social emotional learning curriculums and programs.

School Profile

School Characteristics

The Waterloo Community School District is a large, public district located in Waterloo, Iowa. The Waterloo Community School District serves over 10,000 students. Within the district there are 19 schools, including 11 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 3 high schools. There are preschools located within 8 of the elementary schools. The district is known for its highly diverse student population, with a minority enrollment of almost 60% with almost 10% of students being English language learners. Kittrell Elementary School is one of the 11 elementary schools located in the Waterloo Community School District. Currently Kittrell serves grades pre-k through fifth, with over 600 students enrolled, making it one of the largest elementary schools in the district. This school improvement plan will be implemented at Kittrell Elementary, therefore the data moving forward will focus on Kittrell Elementary School.

The students at Kittrell Elementary play a huge part in all day to day activities that happen at the school. Because Kittrell is a Leader In Me school, students in third through fifth grade have different jobs related to the seven habits implemented within the Leader In Me program. For example, some students are on the assembly committee, making sure assemblies run smoothly and helping draw names from the PBIS prize bins. Some students have the job of greeting students and staff as they enter the building, promoting a positive climate right away in the morning. Others are on the news committee, which involves weekly news recordings of events, news, and other information pertaining to Kittrell and the Waterloo Schools.

Student Performance

The state of Iowa has two large assessments which are indicators of student academic achievement. The first assessment is the FAST assessment. Kittrell Elementary School uses this assessment to measure student's reading performance regarding how fast they can read a grade level passage, along with their accuracy while reading the passage. In the fall of 2022, 53% of students at Kittrell were proficient when given the fall FAST screener. At the end of the school year in 2023, FAST screener results showed that 60% of students were proficient on the end of the year FAST screener, showing a growth of 7%. The state goal is for 80% of students to be proficient on this literacy screener.

Another assessment indicating students' success in the state of Iowa is the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP). This assessment measures reading, writing, and math for students starting in third grade, adding science once students reach fifth grade. All students in third through eleventh grade are required to take the ISASP. According to ISASP data for the 2020-2021 school year pulled from the Iowa Department of Education, 56% of students in third through fifth grade were proficient on the English Language Arts ISASP assessment.

Data for the state of Iowa showed 63% of students proficient on this portion of the assessment. When looking at the math portion of the assessment, data showed that 55% of students in third through fifth grade at Kittrell Elementary were proficient in math, while 67% of students in third through fifth grade were proficient when looking at the state of Iowa.

Student and Community Characteristics

The Waterloo Community School District serves three communities within its boundaries. These communities include Waterloo, Evansdale, and Elk Run Heights. These communities consist of a largely diverse population, making Kittrell's student population diverse as well. During the 2021-2022 school year, Kittrell's student population was made up of 324 male students and 311 female students. The school makeup of race and ethnicity is 43% white, 23% black, 13% Hispanic, 11% Asian, 3% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 7% of students are Multiracial. Kittrell Elementary has an English Language Learner (ELL) population of 24%. Almost 70% of students at Kittrell Elementary qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. There are currently 68 students on an individualized education plan (IEP), resulting in almost 11% of the student population.

Although Kittrell has a largely diverse population, all of the students have the same expectations and goals. The staff at Kittrell believe all students can be successful and grow. Inclusion plays a huge role at Kittrell Elementary School, with many identified students both in special education and in ELL, receiving services in their general education classroom within a co-taught setting. This builds a strong community within the classroom and helps all children feel a sense of belonging in their own general education classroom.

Parent Involvement

Kittrell Elementary school uses ClassDojo to communicate with parents and families about student concerns, behavior, parent concerns, and upcoming school or district events. Each grade level also sends out a monthly newsletter to give families an overview of the upcoming month, what their students are learning, and any upcoming events that they might need to know about. Kittrell Elementary has an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) which provides several fundraisers and events throughout the school year to support the school, students, and staff. Kittrell Elementary's goal each year is to have 100% parent involvement and participation in conferences, and provides different events throughout the year to increase family involvement in student learning such as a family math and literacy night, and a Leader In Me night.

School Mission and Vision

Kittrell Elementary School's mission is to "Empower, encourage, and engage" (Kittrell Elementary School, N.D.). The vision of Kittrell is to empower students to take charge in their learning, encourage them to be great students and citizens, and engage in learning to be successful.

Current Student Learning Goals

Each year the leadership team at Kittrell Elementary collaborates and discusses needs and goals for the upcoming school year. From their discussion, SMART goals are developed for the areas of literacy, math, and behavior. The literacy and math goals for the 2022-2023 school year were based off of previous ISASP scores. Resulting in similar goals written for both math and literacy. The goal for English Language Arts (ELA) states, "ELA proficiency will increase to 65% as measured by the spring 2023 ISASP data" (Kittrell Elementary School, N.D.). The goal for math states, "Math proficiency will increase to 70% as measured by the spring 2023 ISASP

data” (Kittrell Elementary School, N.D.). Along with both math and literacy goals, the leadership team also discusses a behavior focused goal to work towards as well. The behavior goal states, “As a building, we will decrease our referral data by 15% by the end of the 2022-2023 school year” (Kittrell Elementary School, N.D.).

Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

Kittrell Elementary School currently uses Fountas and Pinnell as a reading curriculum for large group and small group reading instruction in grades pre-k through fifth. This curriculum is flexible, and teachers rely on FAST scores and teacher created assessments to measure student learning and growth. Teachers use the Benchmark Assessment System through Fountas and Pinnell to identify each student’s instructional reading level. This assessment measures both accuracy and comprehension regarding student’s reading skills. For writing instruction, Lucy Calkins is implemented for kindergarten through fifth grade. The curriculum consists of three different writing prompts or assessments throughout the year. Math instruction consists of the Bridges curriculum for math in grades pre-k through fifth. This curriculum consists of a variety of different assessments and end of unit tests after each unit has been taught. Social emotional learning is taught using the Second Step curriculum in pre-k through fifth grade. Data and assessments are not currently collected or used in the area of social emotional learning.

In the spring of each school year, third through fifth grade students participate in a statewide assessment known as the ISASP. Third and fourth grade students are tested in the areas of English Language Arts, and math. Fifth grade students are test in the areas of English Language Arts, math, and science. During the spring, ELL students are also given the ELPA21 assessment, which is an English language proficiency assessment helping to determine whether students need support from the program the following year.

Professional Development Practices

The Waterloo Community School District and Kittrell Elementary School have multiple professional learning committees (PLC) established. District wide grade level PLCs meet twice per month rotating math and literacy to collaborate with teachers in other buildings and discuss implementation of the literacy and math curriculums. Special education team leaders and Mandt trainers meet district wide once per month to discuss district goals, data, and needs. At the building level, each grade level has a team leader that meets twice per month with other team leaders in the building to discuss building needs and concerns. Each grade level also has their own PLC to discuss student data, needs, and growth. The special education team, Title team, and ELL team at Kittrell also meet once per week to discuss student needs, data, and concerns.

Along with the monthly and weekly PLC meetings, the district also provides staff with professional development days. The district has approached the district wide PD days in a variety of different ways, with the most popular being staff split into their sub-groups (special education, ELL, etc.) during the morning portion for PD intentionally planned for their needs, and building level PD scheduled for the afternoon based on principal observations of needs and concerns from their school. Kittrell's professional development days usually focus on curriculum, instructional strategies, and team building.

Needs Assessment

Kittrell Elementary School needs to improve in the area of curriculum and instruction. Specifically, Kittrell Elementary would benefit from adopting a new social emotional learning curriculum to implement school wide with fidelity. Kittrell has multiple needs in this area including the academic achievement of students, behaviors of students, and school climate to see and feel an impact on both students and staff.

Although Kittrell is seeing growth in areas including literacy and math when looking at assessment data, it has been difficult to meet the goals set at the beginning of each year. This means although Kittrell is making slow growth, it is not adequate to push them towards state level achievement and proficiency. The research provided by Durlak (2011), Top (2016), and Carroll (2020), provide evidence that implementing a strong social emotional learning program to help teach students how to regulate their emotions and well-being, can increase student's academic achievement, while also increasing their social emotional skills and well-being.

A large factor playing a role in the academic achievement of students is behavior. Currently, Kittrell does not implement a social emotional learning curriculum with fidelity, resulting in only certain classrooms and certain students receiving social emotional instruction. Implementation fidelity is important when it comes to social emotional learning. Students need these skills, and they also need the instruction and learning to be consistent. Rimm-Kaifman (2014) and Kelm (2014) studied the implementation of social emotional learning curriculums. Their research provided evidence in which strong implementation and fidelity of social emotional learning curriculums led to both an increase in academic achievement while also decreasing problem behaviors.

School climate is also important when it comes to the social emotional well-being of both students and staff. Oftentimes social emotional learning can be put off by teachers because of their busy schedules and demands from their district. The inconsistencies in implementation, along with the demands being placed on them can make teachers feel overwhelmed by teaching social emotional learning, leading to poor buy in from teachers, students that do not have adequate social emotional skills, and ultimately a poor school climate. Teachers at Kittrell do not feel like the current curriculum and level of implementation is supporting the students. Some are

not confident teaching the social emotional learning lessons due to lack of training; others feel as if they do not have enough time in their schedules to get the lesson in. Kim (2021) and Milkie and Warner (2011) conducted studies to show the importance of teacher perception and preparedness. When teachers can receive adequate resources and training, they feel more comfortable and confident implementing the curriculum in their classroom. Teachers need to see the reasons behind the curriculum to support it. When the shift is made, it can lead to a better buy in from the teachers. This ensures implementation and students receive what they need to help them be successful.

Data Analysis

Data Summary

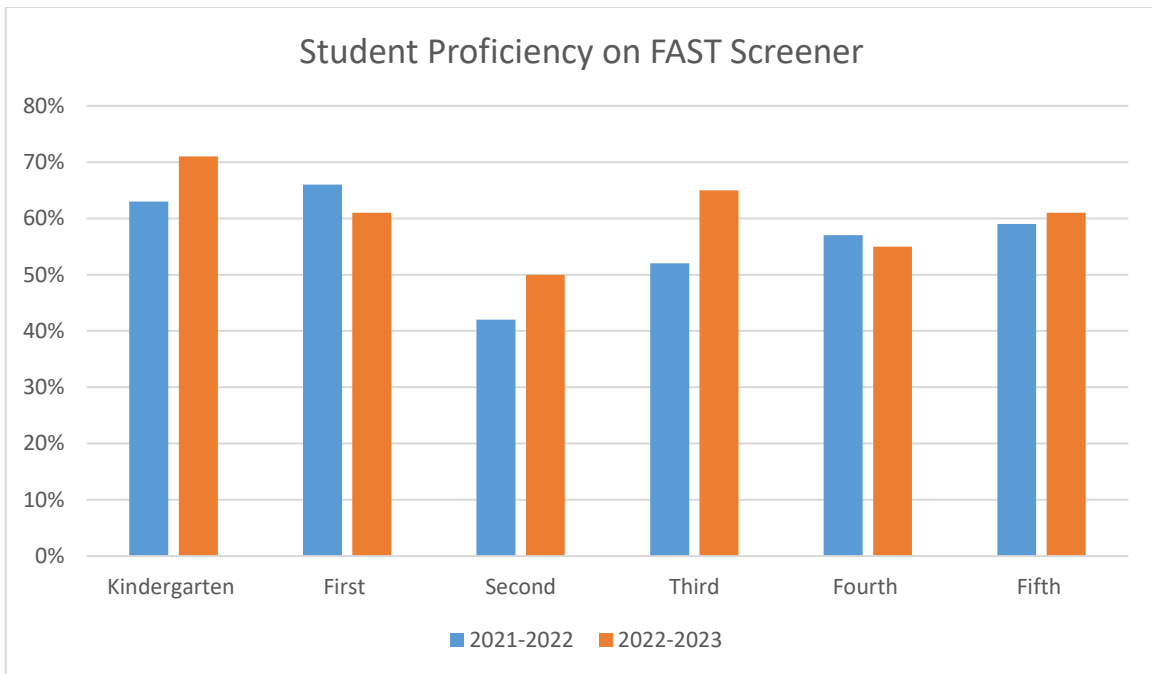
Data has provided evidence that a strong social emotional learning curriculum can benefit students' social emotional well-being and their academic success, as well as build teacher's confidence and social emotional well-being. Data from Kittrell Elementary shows growth, but slow growth, making it difficult to meet school, district, and state goals. There are many different forms of data to examine to help visualize Kittrell's need for change. Data used for this analysis will include data from the FAST assessment, ISASP data, attendance, and behavior data, and Kittrell's data from the conditions of learning survey.

Kittrell Elementary has shown growth in FAST scores over the past two school years in over half of the grade levels. In the 2021-2022 school year, Kittrell's building proficiency was 57%, compared to the 2022-2023 school year with the building proficiency growing 3% to reach 60% building proficiency on the end of year FAST screener. When comparing the FAST screener data from the two school years (see Figure 1), all but two grade levels showed growth. First and fourth grade showed a small decrease in grade level proficiency. School, district, and

state goals indicate that 80% of students in each grade level should be proficient on the end of year FAST screener. Figure 1 shows that Kittrell Elementary did not have any grade level reach the 80% proficiency goal.

Figure 1

Student Proficiency on FAST Screener at Kittrell Elementary



Another assessment and indicator of student academic success is the ISASP assessment. Third through fifth grade students at Kittrell Elementary participate in the state-wide test each spring. Data for this assessment can be compared with the district and state proficiencies for each grade level, helping to provide a visual to represent Kittrell’s place within the data. Data for the ISASP assessment is split by grade level and type of test (ELA or Math). Figures 2 and 3 provide data for Kittrell, the district, and the state on both the ELA and math portion of the ISASP assessment for the 2020-2021 school year. Figures 4 and 5 provide the same information for the 2021-2022 school year.

Figure 2

ELA ISASP Proficiency for the 2020-2021 School Year

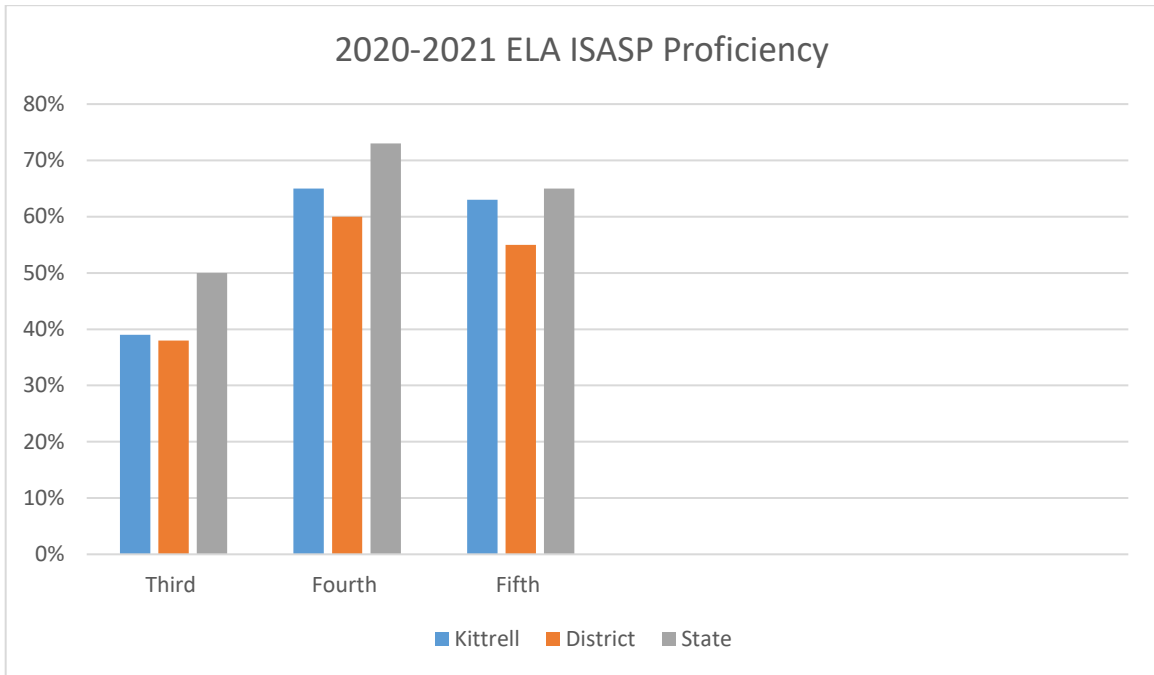


Figure 3

Math ISASP Proficiency for the 2020-2021 School Year

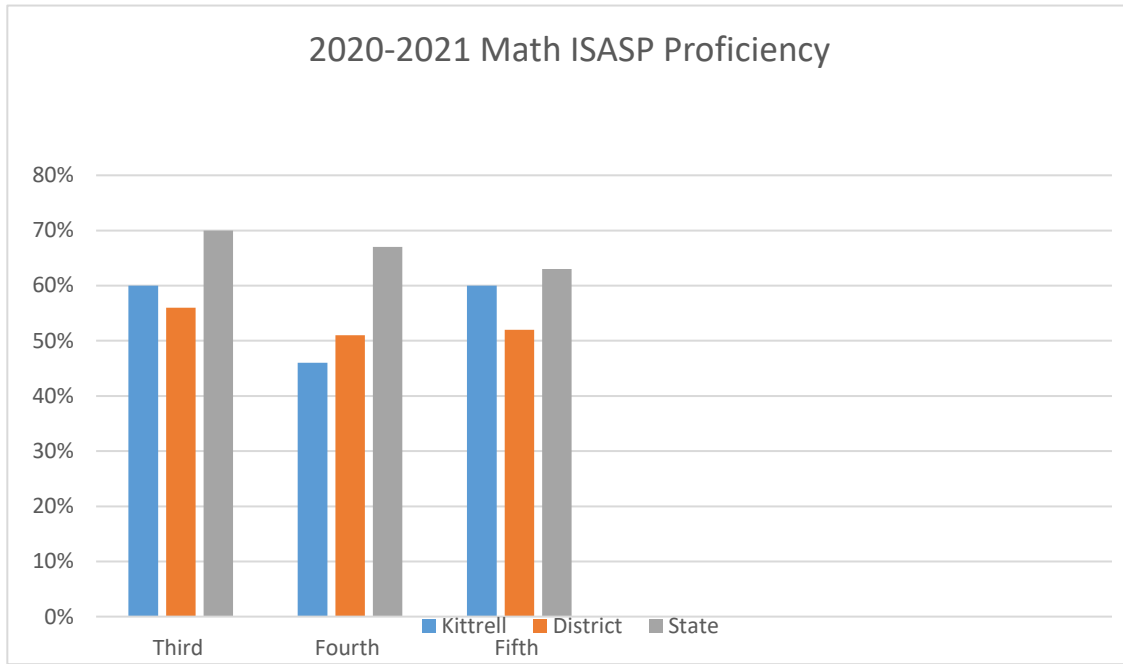


Figure 4

ELA ISASP Proficiency for the 2021-2022 School Year

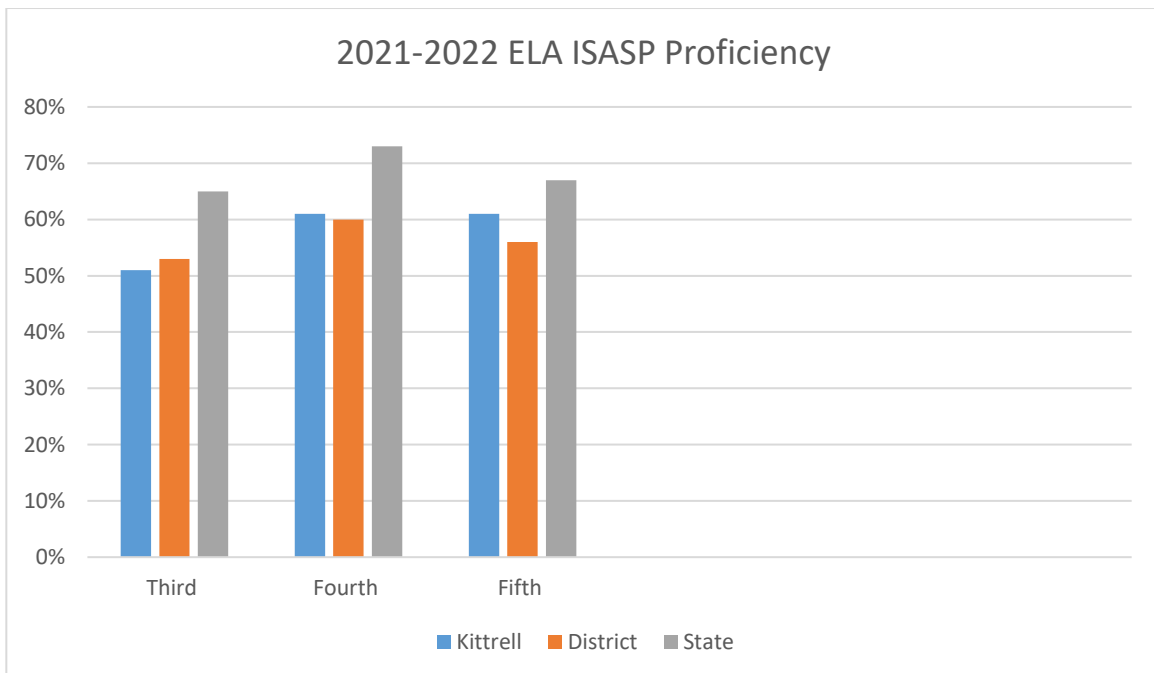
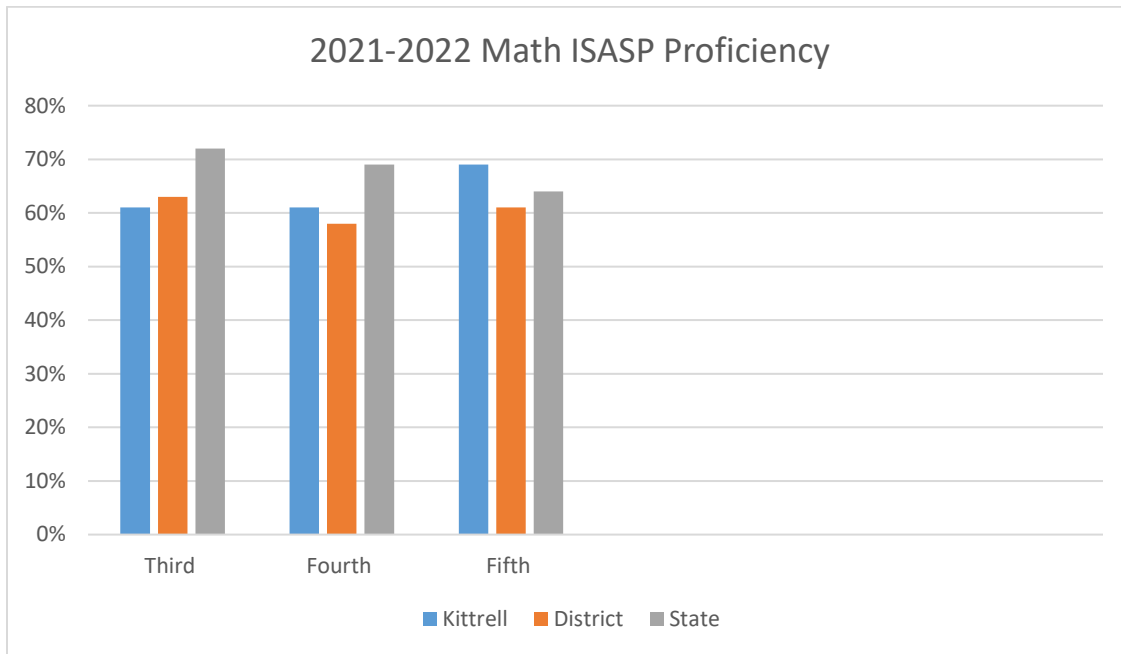


Figure 5

Math ISASP Proficiency for the 2021-2022 School Year



When comparing the ISASP assessment data from year to year, Kittrell showed growth in all grade levels in both the English Language Arts assessment and the math assessment (see Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5). This ISASP data provides evidence Kittrell is showing growth when compared to the district, but struggles to reach the proficiency levels set by the state of Iowa.

There are other forms of data to examine when measuring student success. The conditions for learning survey, attendance data, and behavior data all play a role in determining student success when thinking about student’s well-being.

The data from Kittrell Elementary’s conditions for learning survey led to emotional safety being the largest concern among students. Survey data showed that in 2022, 12% of students felt they were safe from being called names, made fun of, or picked on in a way that

hurt their feelings. This percentage has not changed since before 2021, staying at 12% of students feeling emotionally safe. When looking at state averages for Iowa, emotional safety is the biggest concern among the state as well. The second area of need was physical safety with 56% of students reporting they felt physically safe at school in 2021, decreasing the percentage to 53% in 2022. An area of increase on the survey was the expectations and boundaries portion. This area increased from 68% to 71% of students who know the rules and expectations of their school are to keep them and their peers safe.

During the 2021-2022 school year, there were 167 major behavior referrals at Kittrell Elementary, with 114 minor behavior referrals. Some examples of behaviors resulting in major referrals are, but not limited to, major disrespect, foul or inappropriate language, aggression, fighting, and elopement. Minor referrals are results from instances in the same categories, but not as extreme. The number of referrals for Kittrell provides evidence for a need in a stronger social emotional learning program to help students regulate their emotions and strengthen their own social emotional well-being.

Attendance is also important when thinking about student success both academically and in the social emotional aspect. During the 2022-2023 school year Kittrell's building average for attendance was 92%. When comparing this to the previous year (2021-2022), Kittrell's building average was much higher than the district average which was 87%. District and state-wide data for attendance for the 2022-2023 school year is not yet publicly available. This is evidence students at Kittrell will be present and engaged in social emotional learning when a curriculum is implemented with fidelity, with attendance not hindering student's learning and involvement.

School Strengths

Kittrell Elementary's largest strength is the adult-student relationships and the student-student relationships. When looking at the conditions for learning survey, almost 70% of students responded positively to the adult-student relationship questions. When looking at the student-student relationship portion of the survey, almost 80% of students responded positively, with students feeling comfortable around their peers and feeling included. Kittrell Elementary's teachers and staff make significant efforts each year to build up classroom communities and relationships. This has been a large focus during professional development days in the past, with data showing students and staff are feeling the positive impact of their efforts.

School Challenges

Data shows the biggest areas of weakness at Kittrell Elementary being students are not feeling emotionally or physically safe, with only 12% of students feeling emotionally safe and 53% of students feeling physically safe at school. Another weakness would be Kittrell Elementary students are not meeting district and state goals on the FAST assessment. Even with most grade levels showing growth, all grade levels fall below the 80% benchmark the district and state dictates as a goal.

Assessment Options

To better visualize the needs of Kittrell Elementary School, it would be beneficial to gather and keep more formal year to year data concerning the numbers of behavior referrals (major and minor), along with a more formal record of attendance for the building. It would also benefit the teachers, students, and staff to have an assessment to collect data on the social emotional well-being of students, such as the Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS). This screener is accessed through the same program as the FAST

assessment, and would give teachers data on student's social emotional well-being. Currently, Kittrell does not have formal data or an assessment to utilize for student's social emotional health, besides students who have separate behavior plans.

Action Plan

Strategies

After reviewing research regarding social emotional learning curriculums, there are multiple strategies to support Kittrell Elementary's school improvement plan to implement a new social emotional learning curriculum with fidelity. Kittrell Elementary's plan will focus on supporting students with both their social emotional well-being and academic success, while also supporting the teachers and staff with implementation and their own social emotional well-being.

One critical component of this plan will be not only implementation, but quality implementation. It will be crucial teachers and staff believe in the importance of implementing the curriculum with fidelity. When reviewing research done by Kim et. al. (2021), the importance of training and professional development around social emotional learning is critical when thinking about quality implementation. During training and professional development regarding the new curriculum, teachers will learn it is important to look beyond the behaviors and understand the behavior that is happening to shift the paradigm of behavior, leading to an improved understanding and outlook on behavior (Kim et. al, 2021). Shifting the views and opinions on behavior will set the foundation of implementing the new curriculum to have teachers and staff on the same page.

Another component to support teachers, staff, and the implementation of the new curriculum will be the relationship between staff members' competence in the area of social

emotional learning and the social emotional well-being of students. Lam and Wong's (2017) study examined this relationship and the impact made when teacher's well-being is equally as important as student's well-being. Giving teachers access to opportunities which allow them to gain new knowledge in the area of social emotional learning and expand on their own personal growth and social emotional skills can help teachers appreciate and feel the importance of social emotional well-being, leading to a better buy in from teachers and staff, ultimately supporting the importance of quality implementation. In the study, these opportunities allowed teachers to feel better prepared and more knowledgeable to be successful when it came to increasing student's social and emotional skills (2017).

The final component of this plan will be the support and success of student's social emotional well-being, along with their academic success. Research has shown when students participate and have access to strong social emotional learning programs, it can have a positive impact on their social emotional well-being and academic achievement. Durlak et. al (2011) found when students had access to these interventions and programs, they showed a gain in academic achievement. White and Walker (2018) researched the use of SEL resources and the effects it had on student's social emotional development. When research-based SEL strategies and resources are used in the school setting, they had a positive impact on student's awareness of their emotions and their ability to self-regulate (2018). When a curriculum is implemented correctly, teachers and staff members will start to see the impact of the curriculum on student behavior and academic success.

Steps to Solve the Problem

The following steps describe the implementation of the new social emotional learning curriculum at Kittrell Elementary School. Starting in August of 2023, a social emotional learning

committee will be formed at Kittrell Elementary, led by the school counselor, behavior teacher, and administration. This committee will be open to all teachers and staff, to allow anyone to join to gain opinions and concerns from the entire staff. Once the committee is formed, goals for the new curriculum and implementation of the curriculum will be set, focusing on choosing a curriculum which fits the needs of the school and using a system to ensure implementation and data collection regarding social emotional learning and behavior. These steps will ensure everyone is involved in the decision making process regarding the new curriculum, to promote full staff buy in and implementation.

1. The social emotional learning committee will be formed.
2. A google form (See Figure 6) will be utilized and sent to all staff members regarding their opinions and thoughts on what the new curriculum should focus on and support with implementation. The google form will help the committee when determining the goals of the new curriculum and how to use the implementation data once the curriculum is being implemented.
3. The committee will choose the curriculum which meets the needs of both students and staff at Kittrell Elementary.
4. The committee will create a fidelity checklist for administration to use during observations and walkthroughs to ensure implementation.
5. The committee will create data sheets to record student's SAEBRS scores, implementation data from teachers, and behavior data such as major and minor referrals.
6. Before the start of the 2024-2025 school year, all staff will attend one full day and a half day of professional development and training on the new curriculum, data collection, and

implementation fidelity. This professional development will occur the week before school begins.

7. Teachers will begin the new curriculum on the first day of school, focusing on building relationships and strengthening their classroom community.
8. Observations will begin the third week of school.
 - a. Observations will be conducted by instructional coaches, the school counselor, the behavior teacher, and administration.
 - b. Each teacher in the building will be observed at least one time per week.
 - c. During the observations the fidelity checklist will be utilized, along with any other notes or comments from the observers. Teachers will have immediate access to the checklist and notes.
 - d. The committee will use the walkthrough observation data to input into the data sheets.
 - e. The social emotional learning committee will meet at least two times per month to input data, analyze data, and discuss celebrations, concerns, and areas of need.
 - f. If there are teachers who need more support, a member of the social emotional learning committee will meet with the teacher to provide specific feedback and support.
9. At the end of the first year of implementation, the social emotional learning committee will analyze the data collected from observations, along with beginning and end of year SAEBRS scores, behavior data, and academic data (FAST scores, math test scores, etc.).

10. Data will be shared with district behavior coaches, along with school staff. The social emotional learning committee will continue to meet, following the same protocol, unless a need for change is discussed.

Figure 6

Example of Google Form Questions and Answer Options

Questions	Answers
Which of the following would you like the new SEL curriculum to focus on? Select all that apply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social Interactions ○ Bullying ○ Self-Awareness/Competency ○ Friendship ○ Relationships ○ Regulation of Emotions ○ Classroom Community
How comfortable are you with collecting and sharing data on implementation fidelity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I am comfortable, but I don't want to share it with the entire staff. ○ I am comfortable and my data can be shared. ○ I am not comfortable; I just want to use it for my own reflections.

Implementation of School Improvement Plan

Timeline

The total timeline for this school improvement plan would be two academic school years. The plan would start in August of 2023. A social emotional learning committee will be formed before the start of the 2023-2024 school year. This committee will be the foundation for the school improvement plan. An initial committee meeting will be held in August of 2023 to determine meeting dates for the school year. The committee will meet two times per month for 30 minutes. During the 2023-2024 school year the committee will work on sending out the social emotional learning survey to determine student and staff needs regarding social emotional learning at Kittrell Elementary. Surveys should be sent out to teachers in September of 2023, being due at the beginning of October 2023. Once the surveys are returned, the committee will begin to research different social emotional learning curriculums which fit the needs of the students and staff at Kittrell using information from the survey. During their research they will also be reaching out to other schools and districts to learn about what they are doing for social emotional learning, including going to other schools to observe their social emotional learning lessons. A new curriculum will be chosen by March of 2024.

The first year of the plan will also consist of the committee creating data sheets to use to collect behavior, social emotional learning, and academic data. Towards the end of the first year of the plan, the committee will plan a professional development presentation on the SAEBRS assessment tool teachers will be using to collect baseline data, along with social emotional well-being data on students while they are implementing the new curriculum. The training will take place during a professional development day in February of 2024. Once staff has been trained and informed regarding the SAEBRS assessment, teachers will begin using the tool to gather baseline data for students' social emotional well-being. The social emotional learning committee will support teachers as they navigate the assessment tool. This baseline data will then be

recorded using the data sheets created by the social emotional learning committee. In May of 2024, the social emotional learning committee and teachers at Kittrell Elementary will input beginning and end of year FAST scores for each student, along with math pre and post-test scores onto the academic recording sheet. Along with academic data, teachers and the committee members will also input behavior data, such as minor and major referrals and SAEBRS scores into the data recording sheets.

Before the start of the 2024-2025 school year, the social emotional learning committee will connect with curriculum leaders regarding the curriculum that was chosen for Kittrell Elementary School. Training sessions will be set up for the week before the school year starts to prepare teachers for implementation of the new curriculum. Training will be one full day and a half of a day and will consist of implementation of the new curriculum, a review of the SAEBRS assessment tool and how to use it, and collecting and inputting data into the data collection sheets.

Implementation of the new curriculum will begin during the first week of the 2024-2025 school year. Observations done by the social emotional learning committee will start in September of 2024. Each teacher in the building will be observed during SEL time at least one time per week by one of the members of the social emotional learning committee. This includes the behavior teacher, the school counselor, and school administration (principal, assistant principal, coaches, etc.). The social emotional learning committee will use a fidelity checklist to ensure teachers are implementing the curriculum daily, as it states on their daily schedule. The fidelity checklist will also include any observation notes, celebrations, or concerns from the observer. The teacher will receive immediate feedback once the observation is complete. The social emotional learning committee will continue meeting two times per month to discuss

observations, data, and implementation. In January of 2025, teachers implementing with fidelity, who have had good observations, will begin to be observed two times per month. Teachers who need more support will continue with the one time per week observations.

At the end of the 2024-2025 school year the social emotional learning committee will present data, celebrations, and concerns during the whole staff end of the year professional development. This will include a review of the first year of implementation and any feedback from teachers and/or staff regarding the implementation of the new social emotional learning curriculum. At this time the social emotional learning committee will also present the plan for moving forward with implementation for the 2025-2026 school year.

Resources

The resources that will be utilized during this plan will include the social emotional learning curriculum determined by the social emotional learning committee. Resources will also include the committee members, district administration as necessary, data sheets to record both academic and behavior data, the SAEBRS assessment tool, academic data such as FAST scores and math scores from pre and post-tests, and behavior data from minor and major referrals.

Staff Responsibilities

Social Emotional Learning Committee

The social emotional learning committee will determine the needs of students and staff regarding social emotional learning. After determining the needs of the school, the committee will research multiple SEL curriculums, including visiting other districts and schools to find a curriculum which fits the needs of Kittrell Elementary School. The social emotional learning committee will lead professional development regarding the curriculum, assessment tools, data,

and observations. Members of the committee will be committed to meeting twice per month for 30 minutes, as well as observing different teachers and classrooms throughout the week.

Observations will include feedback from the committee members regarding implementation, concerns, and/or celebrations. The social emotional learning committee will play a huge role in this school improvement plan and members will need to be committed to their responsibilities.

Administration (Principal and Assistant Principal)

The principal and assistant principal will be members of the social emotional learning committee, along with overseeing their other duties regarding observations and feedback. Along with responsibilities connected to the social emotional learning committee, administration will be responsible for ensuring approval for the new curriculum and its purchase. Administration will lead any conversations regarding concerns about the curriculum and implementation with teachers after observations have been done. Administration will ensure the social emotional learning committee is meeting on a regular basis and all teachers and staff are following the school improvement plan.

Teachers

Teachers at Kittrell Elementary will be responsible for attending curriculum training and professional development regarding the new curriculum and implementation. They will also be responsible for implementing the curriculum in their classroom, using the SAEBRS assessment tool, and collecting and inputting data on a regular basis using the data sheets provided by the social emotional learning committee.

Other Staff (Paraprofessionals, Interpreters, etc.)

All other staff at Kittrell Elementary will be responsible in attending the training and professional development regarding the new curriculum and implementation. All staff should be aware of the key components of the curriculum to have common language throughout the school to help with implementation.

Data Collection

Throughout this plan there will be multiple tools used for data collection. The first tool used will be Google Forms, for the initial survey to determine the needs for social emotional learning at Kittrell Elementary. From there, the social emotional learning committee will use Google Sheets to record academic and behavior data, as well as record the data teachers receive from using the SAEBRS assessment tool. FAST and math scores will be entered as soon as teachers receive the data after students are done testing. Behavior data will be entered each month, with administration's ability to pull school wide referral data and reports. Data will be reviewed and entered using the sheets each month during the social emotional learning committee's meeting. The Google Sheets will be shared with all teachers to allow teachers to input student data as they continue throughout the year. This will relieve some of the work that is done by the social emotional learning committee, leaving more time for the committee to analyze and discuss the data.

Barriers and Challenges

One barrier which will greatly impact this plan is time. The social emotional learning committee, administration, teachers, and staff will have to find the time to learn and study the new curriculum for the implementation to be successful. The social emotional learning committee will need to be flexible when scheduling observation times to meet the goal of all

teachers being observed at least one time per week during the beginning of implementation. Another barrier will be teacher and staff buy in. All staff will need to shift their mindset to feel success from the implementation of the new curriculum. Kim et. al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of a paradigm shift regarding perceptions on behavior. When teachers can look beyond and understand the behaviors, they begin to have a better understanding and outlook (2021). When social emotional learning curriculums are implemented correctly with fidelity, both students and staff can feel the success both behaviorally and academically.

Conclusion

Social emotional learning is an important part of education and human development (CASEL, 2023). The implementation of a social emotional learning curriculum can have positive effects on both students and staff when the curriculum is implemented with fidelity. Evidence-based SEL interventions are an important part of safe, supportive, and academically productive learning environments (Schwartz et al., 2022). Social emotional learning can support students and staff with both academic achievements and behavior. Kittrell Elementary School will see these positive impacts once staff are better prepared and supported in the area of social emotional learning, and once students start to feel the positive impact the social emotional learning curriculum will provide. This plan will not only help improve student and staff's social emotional well-being, but will also increase scores academically while decreasing problem behaviors.

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