

## INTRODUCTION

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

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

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

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

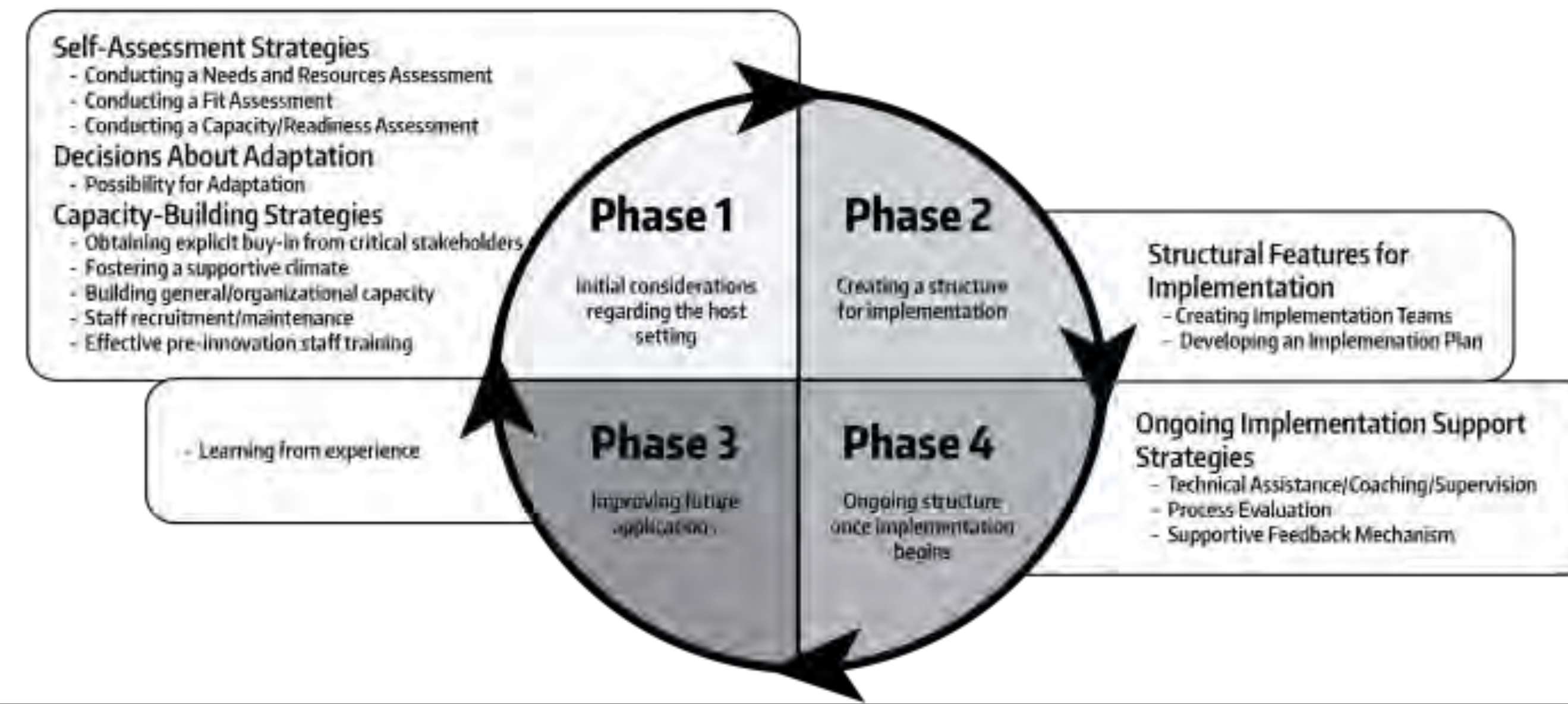
**Document Analysis:** The following documents were analyzed to supplement focus groups and interviews:

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

## RESEARCH QUESTION

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

### Quality Implementation Framework



## RESULTS

### Strategies aligned with the QIF

**1 Initial Considerations Regarding the Host Setting**

**Self-assessment Strategies**

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

**Decisions about Adaptation**

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

**Capacity Building**

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

**2 Creating a Structure for Implementation**

**Implementation structures**

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

### Sample quotes discussing the QIF-aligned implementation strategies

#### Phase 1: Initial Considerations Regarding the Host Setting

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

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

3

Ongoing Structure Once Implementation Begins

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Improving Future Applications

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

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

#### Phase 2: Implementation Structures

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

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

#### Phase 3: Ongoing Support

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

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

#### Phase 4: Improving Future Applications

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

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

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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

## REFERENCES

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