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Teacher Implementation of a School Based Anxiety Prevention Program in British Columbia

Natashia Soraiya Bacchus
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Natashia Soraiya Bacchus

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Teacher Implementation of a School Based Anxiety Prevention Program in British
Columbia

by

Natashia Soraiya Bacchus

M. Ed, University of Northern British Columbia, 2004

BA, Simon Fraser University, 1993

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Psychology

Walden University

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Abstract

The Friends for Life program is an evidence-based practice being used in schools to assist children to learn skills to manage anxiety. The Friends for Life program has been used by school districts in British Columbia, Canada, for over 10 years, yet there is little research on how the program is being implemented in schools by teachers. This qualitative case study investigated the implementation practice of the Friends for Life program by teachers in Grades 4 and 5. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 teachers from a smaller school district in British Columbia, Canada. The results yielded themes, which described critical factors that helped or hindered teachers in implementing the program with fidelity. A key finding of the study demonstrated teachers were running the program weekly, as per program guidelines. A key factor that was identified as helping teachers to implement the program with fidelity was support of school counselors, district staff, and the building administrator. The implications for social change include providing school administrators with information, which can help them to support teachers to implement the Friends for Life program with fidelity. As a result of these findings the Friends for Life program may consider updating the training materials and program implementation protocols in order to ensure teachers are implementing the program with fidelity and therefore, children are learning the skills they need to manage their anxieties and worries.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the late Dr. Kazim Bacchus, who provided an excellent example of a scholar practitioner who dedicated his life to social change and always supported and encouraged my pursuit of a higher education. As well, to my uncle Faizal Bacchus, your love and support has meant the world to me and I miss you dearly! I am very sad you are not here to share in this accomplishment with me.

I would also like to dedicate this to my mother, Diane Bacchus, who, for as long as I can remember, has always supported and encouraged my pursuit of a higher education. And finally, to my soon to be husband, for supporting me through this journey, and not letting me quit, even when it was all I wanted to do! I could not have done this without all of your love and support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The FRIENDS for Life program is a multicomponent, school-based anxiety prevention program aimed at building resilience in children and families by teaching cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills so participants are better equipped to manage their anxiety and worries (Barrett & Turner, 2001). The program used the acronym “FRIENDS” to remind children of the important skills they learned during the program including:

- **Feelings**—understand your own feelings and the feelings of others;
- **Relax**—engage in activities that help you to calm down and relax so you can feel better and perform your best;
- **Inner thoughts**—think positive, helpful thoughts that make you feel brave and therefore better able to cope in difficult situations;
- **Explore Solutions**—break difficult situations into small steps and use role models and family in your support teams;
- **Now Reward Yourself**—reward yourself for each step you climb and for your best effort, not for being perfect;
- **Do it every day**—this step is a reminder to plan for difficult situations in advance and practice your FRIENDS skills;
- **Smile! Stay calm for life**—stay calm and spend time with special people who make you feel good about yourself (Ministry of Children and Family Development [MCFD], 2016).

In the literature, the program was referred to using the acronym FRIENDS as opposed to listing the individual skills identified by each letter of the word FRIENDS; therefore, FRIENDS will also be used in this research study as well.

In this chapter, I discuss the evidenced-based nature of the FRIENDS program. I also discuss research on the importance of implementing programs in schools with fidelity and how the lack of literature on how the FRIENDS for Life program was implemented by teachers has led to the research questions. I explain a conceptual framework posited by Domitrovich et al. (2008) and Carroll et al. (2007) that formed the basis of the research project. In the framework, the authors addressed characteristics of the intervention and the intervention support system. I conclude Chapter 1 with a brief discussion of case study methodology and why I selected this methodology to answer the research questions. In Chapter 1, I also address the scope, limitations, and significance of this study.

The FRIENDS for Life program was endorsed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an effective intervention used to decrease anxiety symptoms in children (WHO, 2004) and has been adopted in British Columbia, Canada, by the MCFD as a universal early intervention/prevention program. After completion of the FRIENDS for Life program, children self-reported statistically lower anxiety scores on the Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (Barrett, Farrell, Ollendick, & Dadds, 2010; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, & Goddard, 2008), and lower depression scores on the Children's Depression Inventory (Barrett et al., 2010). Children also reported an increase in self-esteem as measured through the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Questionnaire Form B (Stallard,

Simpson, Anderson, & Goddard 2008). The results were attained in a variety of settings; however, these studies all included highly structured implementation protocols, reports on adherence, and implementers who were not part of the regular classroom (nurses, educational psychologists, clinicians, teachers with the assistance of clinical psychology graduate students, and researchers). Given that research indicated the FRIENDS for Life program worked when implementation protocols were adhered to, it is important to understand how the program was actually implemented in schools by regular classroom teacher implementers.

There was evidence to suggest that the FRIENDS for Life program, when conducted in highly structured, clinical (Lock & Barrett, 2003), community based, (Farrell, Barrett, Claassens, 2005), or school trials (Schoenfeld & Mathur, 2009) assisted children by lowering their anxiety and depression while increasing their ability to cope. However, there was a lack of information on how the program was implemented in regular classrooms by teacher implementers. The highly structured research trials all included protocols that provided information on how the program was implemented and how implementation was monitored. For example, in the community based trial by Farrell et al. (2005), the program sessions took place in a private psychology clinic and included strict implementation protocols. The protocols included ten 90 minute weekly sessions with make-up sessions for any students who missed the instruction, weekly take home information for parents, and a parent presentation in which parents were taught information on positive reinforcement, the cognitive techniques used in the program, and problem-solving skills. In the school-based trial, the intervention was conducted by the

lead author in the study; a 1:1 format was used to teach children the program content in twelve 30 minute sessions, and the content taught was reported (Schoenfeld & Mathur, 2009). The protocol outlined in the Schoenfeld and Mathur (2009) study was not necessarily reflective of the actual implementation practices of a classroom teacher. Teachers received the 1-day teacher training, which included information on how the program should be implemented (MCFD, 2016). However, once teachers began implementing the program, there was little information on what their implementation practice actually looked like. If teachers do not implement the program as prescribed, schools could be wasting valuable time and resources on a practice that is not evidenced-based. Neil and Christenson (2007) echoed this concern stating that future research of school-based prevention programs for anxiety should focus on implementation. According to the authors, a focus on implementation would not only determine the supports teachers needed to deliver the program with fidelity but also increase intervention effects. In the following study, I have addressed this gap in the literature.

Problem Statement

Anxiety disorders are the most prevalent mental health disorder experienced by children and youth (Costello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler, & Angold, 2003). It was estimated that between 8% and 22% of children and adolescents may suffer from an anxiety disorder (Briesch, Hagermoser Sanetti, & Briesch, 2010). Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), the theoretical foundation of the FRIENDS program, was shown to be an effective therapeutic modality to treat children's anxiety individually (Barrett & Turner, 2001) and as a universal school-based prevention intervention (Lock & Barrett, 2003).

The FRIENDS for Life program was described as a multicomponent school-based anxiety prevention program aimed at building resilience in children and families by teaching cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills so participants are better equipped to manage their anxieties and worries (Barrett & Turner, 2001). Three levels of the FRIENDS for Life Program are being offered in British Columbia, Canada: the Kindergarten and Grade 1 curricula, known as the Fun FRIENDS program; the Grade 4 and 5 curricula, known as the Child FRIENDS program; and the Grade 6 and 7 curricula, known as the Youth FRIENDS program. The focus of this research project was the Child FRIENDS program, which will be referred to for the remainder of this study as the FRIENDS program.

The FRIENDS program is an evidence-based practice with research findings that demonstrated that upon completion of the program, children reported statistically lower scores for depression and anxiety on self-report scales (Barrett, et al., 2010; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, Hibbert, & Osborn, 2008). Further, children reported an increase in self-esteem scores (Stallard et al., 2005). Although the evidence suggested the FRIENDS program assisted in lowering anxiety and depression while the students' coping ability increased, there was a lack of information on fidelity of program implementation in schools, which means that this intervention may not have achieved the same results in schools as was previously reported in the research.

The concepts of intervention outcomes and implementation outcomes are related; however, they are distinctly different. Intervention outcomes describe the effect the intervention had on the participant, such as lowering scores for anxiety or depression

(Forman, 2015). In contrast, implementation outcomes describe how much of the intervention was delivered as prescribed by the program creators (Forman 2015). Programs implemented with increased implementation fidelity result in better intervention outcomes for students (Forman, 2015). Hence, it was necessary to ensure implementation fidelity in order to increase intervention outcomes for children and help them to effectively manage their anxiety and depression.

The FRIENDS program incorporated a variety of implementation strategies that were taught to teachers during a one-day facilitator training session. Unfortunately, in the current research on the FRIENDS program, there was little information on the current level of implementation fidelity or adherence. Essentially, very little was known about how teachers incorporated the actual FRIENDS program resources, lessons, and program integration techniques into their classrooms and curricula. The meaningful gap in the literature indicated that researchers may have been inaccurately over- or underestimating the impact of the intervention (Fraser, Richman, Galinsky, & Day, 2009). As such, schools may have supported the program because of the results found in the research trials but due to implementation fidelity issues may not have achieved the desired results.

The general problem was the prevalence of anxiety disorders in children and youth; anxiety was cited as the most common psychiatric condition that young people face (Creswell, Waite, & Cooper, 2014). In order to address the prevalence of anxiety, schools used the evidenced-based FRIENDS program to teach children the skills needed to cope with and manage anxious symptomology. However, the lack of information on fidelity of FRIENDS program implementation in schools meant that the use of this

intervention may not have achieved the same results that had been found in the research. Thus, the specific problem was the lack of research on how teachers implemented this program. If the program was implemented with high fidelity, then statistically lower scores for anxiety and depression in children are expected. However, if teachers were not implementing the program with fidelity, then the intervention results for children would be compromised by a practice that was not evidence-based.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to understand how the FRIENDS program was implemented in the classroom in a small district in the province of British Columbia. Specifically, I aimed to address whether teachers followed the guidelines as prescribed in their 1-day training, or used adaptations or modifications in their implementation. Furthermore, I addressed the constraints that affected teacher's abilities to implement the program as designed in elementary schools in a small district in the province of British Columbia. The central phenomenon of the study was how the FRIENDS program was implemented in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms and the factors that impacted program implementation for teachers.

Implementation variation of the FRIENDS program in schools was an important focus of study, as variations in implementation impact program outcomes. DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002) reviewed 55 independent studies and found that programs that monitored implementation obtained effect sizes three times larger than programs that did not report monitoring of implementation. Additionally, Durlak and DuPre (2008) reviewed 542 studies and found strong empirical support that the level of

implementation affects intervention outcomes in prevention programs. Ultimately, achieving good implementation fidelity leads to stronger benefits for children taking the program. Hence, the gap in the literature regarding implementation of the FRIENDS program in schools was important to address in order to ensure children taking this program obtain the positive results that have been found in the research.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do teachers describe their practice of implementation of the FRIENDS program in their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms?

RQ2: How does the individual teacher's practice of implementing the FRIENDS program differ from what is found in the program guidelines?

RQ3: Why do teachers make the decisions they do regarding implementation; are there factors that have impacted implementation and fidelity of implementation?

Conceptual Framework

Domitrovich et al. (2008) provided a conceptual framework for determining implementation quality of school-based programs. The authors specifically addressed the implementation period after a district had decided to adopt a program, but prior to the program becoming an entrenched part of the school curricula. In the framework, Domitrovich et al. addressed the characteristics of the intervention and the intervention support system. The characteristics of the intervention included the strategies or innovations teachers used that were linked to the desired outcomes or objectives of the program (Domitrovich et al., 2008). The intervention support system was the lens through which the intervention operated; this could include internal policies, practices, or

support from school administration (Domitrovich et al., 2008). In this study, I was specifically interested in understanding the characteristics of the intervention, how the level of administrative support received impacted teacher implementation fidelity, and if there were internal policies or practices that helped or hindered teacher implementation efforts.

In this model, Domitrovich et al. (2008) stated that implementation quality was connected to a standardized model that was specific to the intervention and support system and encompassed the core elements and delivery of the program. The framework provided by Domitrovich et al. (2008) fit well into my research on the FRIENDS program as the program had been adopted on a macro level in the province school districts. Through this research, I specifically investigated how the FRIENDS program was being implemented in districts that had trained teacher implementers.

Carroll et al. (2007) also provided a conceptual framework for determining implementation fidelity. Carroll et al. defined implementation fidelity as follows: “[I]mplementation fidelity is the degree to which programs are implemented as intended by program developers” (p. 1). According to the authors, a measurement of implementation fidelity was also a measurement of program adherence. To this end, program adherence comprised four subcategories: content, frequency, duration, and dosage (Carroll et al., 2007). Carroll et al.’s definition of implementation fidelity and the subcategories of program adherence were used in this study to determine what Domitrovich et al. (2008) referred to as characteristics of the intervention.

The research demonstrated that program implementation impacted program outcomes; teachers who implemented the program with fidelity could expect decreased levels of anxiety and depression (Barrett et al., 2010; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, Hibbert et al., 2008) and increased coping skills and self-esteem (Stallard et al., 2005) of students participating in the program. By implementing the program as designed, schools achieved the research-based and prescribed outcomes found in research trials, ultimately giving children skills and tools to manage their own anxiety and worries. This knowledge also benefits school-based administrators who could ensure that teachers are supported to implement the program as prescribed or assist to alleviate any concerns that were found to impact teacher implementation fidelity.

Nature of the Study

Within this qualitative paradigm, a multiple case study design methodology was used. In this case study design, I investigated bounded cases through a detailed data collection strategy that included multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013). This study began with the identification of appropriate cases, in other words, teachers who had recently (within the last year) or were currently in the process of implementing the program in their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms. The intention was to study real life cases that were in progress so accurate knowledge and information would be garnered.

Definition of Terms

Implementation fidelity: The degree to which programs are implemented as intended by the program developers (Carroll et al., 2007).

Implementation variation: The difference between how a program was actually delivered and how it was intended to be delivered (Durlak, 2013).

Indicated prevention interventions: Programs intended for those displaying symptoms and who are at risk or meet diagnostic criteria; these programs are typically offered in a 1:1 format (Liddle & MacMillan, 2010).

Selected or targeted programs: Programs that pull a select group of children out of class and only deliver the program to those for whom extra support is deemed necessary (Liddle & MacMillan, 2010)

Universal program: Programs that are offered to all students within a specified grade level (Liddle & MacMillan, 2010).

Assumptions

I had assumptions that are important to share with the reader to ensure transparency in the research process. My first assumption was that teachers were implementing the FRIENDS program voluntarily in their classrooms. This assumption was because implementation of the program was not currently mandated by either the Ministry of Education or individual school districts. The second assumption I had was that teachers decided to implement this program because they believed the program would assist children to acquire the coping skills necessary to manage anxiety, worry, and ultimately change the culture and climate of the classroom. However, teachers may be swayed by other curricular demands placed on them or when they feel that they are not being supported to complete the program as prescribed. These assumptions were important as they could have biased this research and my interpretation and meaning-

making from participants' data. To combat this potential bias, I used member-checking strategies to confirm my interpretation was consistent with the participants' perspectives.

Scope and Delimitations

For the scope of this research, the focus was on Grade 4 and 5 teachers who have implemented the FRIENDS program in their classrooms. In the program guidelines provided by MCFD, the programs were all developmentally tailored to children in the identified age range. The FRIENDS program was written to be developmentally appropriate for Grade 4 and 5 students, and therefore, in theory, the teacher should not have had to amend or improvise the content in order to present the materials.

For this case study, I chose to focus on a small district in the province of British Columbia. I chose the location partially due to convenience, as well as having preliminary support from the district to complete the study. The study provided insight into the experiences of teacher implementers in the school district, and although the results may not be generalizable to other districts, the information from the study provided key insight into common factors to address in other districts. That is, the study provides administrators and other key staff a place to start when deciding whether to implement the FRIENDS program in their respective schools or districts.

Limitations

Limitations inherent in this study include the small sample size, which decreases the generalizability of the results and the ability to make causal inferences regarding the data. The limitations in regards to sample size were minimized by ensuring that the sampling procedure was reported fully and that an in-depth understanding of the

participants' experience was captured. Furthermore, I kept a reflective journal in which I noted any decisions made regarding sampling and saturation of data. A second limitation of this study was my inability to make causal inferences from the data as I am unable to rule out alternative explanations. I remained cognizant of this fact during my data analysis so I did not make generalizations or causal connections from the limited sample of teachers I interviewed.

Significance

The FRIENDS program is currently being implemented in school districts throughout British Columbia, Canada. The program is also being implemented internationally in the following countries: Australia, Brazil, Finland, Hong Kong, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Singapore, Sweden, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, China, Greece, Cyprus, and Peru (MCFD, 2016). However, a thorough study of fidelity of implementation of the FRIENDS program had not been conducted. The findings from this study could help school districts throughout the world ensure that teachers are supported to implement the program as prescribed and taught in the 1-day teacher training. When programs are implemented poorly, it not only wastes valuable resources but also diminishes the likelihood of program success (Durlak, 2013). There is strong evidence to suggest that the level of implementation fidelity affects intervention outcomes in prevention programs (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). The results of this study provide much needed insight into the process and structure of implementation as it pertains to the FRIENDS program delivered in classrooms by regular classroom teachers. By implementing the program as designed, schools can achieve the outcomes found in

research trials, therefore ensuring children are learning the skills necessary to manage their own anxiety and worries.

Summary and Conclusions

The FRIENDS program is a school-based prevention program that was offered to children in various districts around the province of British Columbia and around the world. The program was proven effective in clinical settings in decreasing anxiety and depression while increasing coping and resiliency skills. Given the rates and prevalence of anxiety and barriers to service, the FRIENDS program provides much needed intervention that can be offered universally to all children in the specified program grade levels in elementary schools.

The FRIENDS program was endorsed by the WHO as being effective in decreasing anxiety symptoms in children (WHO, 2004) and lowering overall rates of anxiety and depression when completed in research trials (Barrett, Lock, Farrell, & Dadds, 2006). There was, however, little research on how this program was implemented in real world classroom settings. It was unknown whether teachers were implementing the program as prescribed. The factors that helped or hindered full implementation of the program in schools was also not known.

If teachers implemented the program as prescribed, social change would result from lowered levels of anxiety and depression in children and increased rates of self-esteem. If teachers were not implementing the program as prescribed, the questions were why they were not, what the factors were that impacted implementation, and whether

those issues could be addressed prior to program implementation, thereby assisting with program adherence.

In Chapter 1, I discussed the FRIENDS program and how it was being implemented in schools to assist children to learn coping strategies to manage their anxiety and build their resilience. I reported on the evidenced based nature of the program when delivered in clinical or school-based trials with highly prescriptive implementation protocols. I also examined the importance of studying implementation and fidelity of implementation. Further, I discussed the conceptual framework that formed the basis of this study. I discussed the qualitative case study paradigm that I used to understand the perspectives of teachers who implemented the program in classrooms. I then defined some key terms to ensure accuracy and consistency. I followed this with a discussion of my personal assumptions that could bias my study and steps I took to mitigate against these assumptions. I then provided information on the scope and delimitations to the study to ensure the project was attainable and that I did not become swayed from my original intention or focus. I also discussed the significance of this study and implications for social change. I concluded with a summary of the information contained in Chapter 1. In Chapter 2, I address the current literature on the prevalence of anxiety in children, treatment of anxiety in children, universal school based programs, the FRIENDS program, and current research on program implementation and fidelity.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Anxiety disorders are the most prevalent mental health disorder experienced by children and youth. In 2010, it was found that between 8% and 22% of U.S. children and youth were impacted by this disorder (Briesch et al., 2010). In 2013, Essau and Ollendick indicated that between 9% and 32% of children and youth were impacted by anxiety. The fact that the rate of anxiety in children is this high is alarming. Furthermore, many children and youth never receive treatment for anxiety (Government of Canada, 2016). The lack of access to treatment is due to a variety of issues including lack of knowledge about the condition, lack of access to services, and stigmatization around mental health issues (Essau, 2005; Neil & Christensen, 2007).

CBT is a short-term therapy that has been used to treat anxiety in all populations, including children and youth. CBT is the theoretical foundation of the FRIENDS program, which has been implemented universally in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms. Research on the FRIENDS program demonstrates that postintervention, children report statistically lower scores for depression and anxiety (Barrett et al., 2010; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, & Goddard, 2008) and an increase in self-esteem scores (Stallard et al., 2005).

Although research indicates that the program does work in clinical and research trials, little was known about the actual implementation of the program in classrooms by teacher implementers. This lack of knowledge begs certain questions such as, whether teachers are able to implement the program as prescribed in their one-day training or do they adapt the program. The question also arises regarding constraints that may impact a

teacher's ability to implement the program as designed. Essentially, this research focused on the factors that impacted teacher implementation efforts in order to better understand how teachers could be fully supported to implement the program as outlined in their teacher training day.

In this chapter, I discuss fear and anxiety in children, treatment options including early intervention and prevention, the effectiveness of universal school-based programs, research on the FRIENDS program, the importance of implementation fidelity, and the conceptual framework upon which this research was built.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategy included all education and psychology databases through Walden University, as well as multidisciplinary search engines including Pro Quest, EBSCO, and Academic Search Complete. The following key terms were used in the search: *FRIENDS Program, FRIENDS for Life, program implementation, program fidelity, fidelity, implementation, evaluation of school-based programs, anxiety, anxiety in children, treatment of anxiety, prevention of anxiety, and prevalence of anxiety*. Upon completion of the Walden University search, the terms and phrases listed were also all searched through Google Scholar.

Conceptual Framework

Domitrovich et al. (2008) provided a conceptual framework for determining the implementation quality of school-based programs. The framework specifically addressed the time after a program had been adopted by a school but before the program became entrenched in the curriculum. The framework put forth by Domitrovich et al. is well

adapted for the FRIENDS program as the program has been adopted by the British Columbia MCFD at a macro level. MCFD provided training and resources to teachers in British Columbia, free of charge. All school districts within the province had a liaison who ensured training and resources were made available to districts. Schools, districts, and teachers had the flexibility to decide if this was a program they wanted to adopt. The framework posited by Domitrovich et al. also supported intervention strategies at both a school level and an individual or teacher level. Because this research focused on teachers who implemented the program in their classrooms, the school level of adoption was not addressed. It was assumed the classroom teacher had received support by the school administration to start the program in their classroom. This research will address what Domitrovich et al. referred to as implementation quality, which was connected to the actual intervention and support system in place that allowed the teacher to continue the intervention in a manner that followed program delivery guidelines.

The characteristics of the intervention included the strategies or innovations teachers used that were linked to the desired outcomes or objectives of the program. The intervention support system is the lens through which the intervention operated; this could include internal policies, practices, or support from school administration (Domitrovich et al., 2008). In this study, I was specifically interested in understanding the characteristics of the intervention, whether or not the level of administrative support received impacted teacher implementation fidelity, and the internal policies or practices that helped or hindered teacher implementation efforts.

Carroll et al. (2007) also provided a conceptual framework to determine implementation fidelity. According to the researchers, implementation fidelity was a potential moderator between the intervention and the outcomes, hence the importance of measuring implementation fidelity (Carroll et al., 2007). A measurement of implementation fidelity is a measurement of program adherence or whether the intervention was delivered as outlined by the designers. Program adherence comprised the subcategories content, frequency, duration and coverage or dosage (Carroll et al., 2007). Berkel, Mauricio, Schoenfelder, & Sadler (2011) agreed that an essential component in a measurement of fidelity included a measurement of dosage; however, the researchers also stated that no widely accepted standards of measurement currently existed (Berkel et al., 2011). Fidelity measures typically included defining the core components of the program and assessing the level and extent to which those components were delivered.

Worry, Fear, and Anxiety

The term *worry* is used to describe fearful thought processes that occur in the absence of danger (Carr & Szabo, 2015). In children, worry is less associated with this cognitive process and more associated with fear (Muris, Merckenbach, Gadet, & Moolaert, 2000). In this discussion, I focused on the concepts of fear and anxiety in children.

Anxiety disorders are a group of mental disorders that share features of fear, anxiety, and behavioral disturbances (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Fear is an emotional alarm response to present or imminent danger, whether that danger is real or

perceived. The threat is typified by autonomic arousal and fight-or-flight reactions; these reactions are adaptive and can act to enhance performance (Barrett, 2015). Anxiety, on the other hand, includes the anticipation of upcoming negative events, whether real or perceived, and is typified by tension, apprehension, and worry. This occurs in the absence of a threat; it is maladaptive and can hinder performance (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Barrett, 2015; MCFD, 2016).

Anxiety and fear overlap, but they are also different; fear is associated with thoughts that invoke automatic arousal and prepare the body for the fight-or-flight response and escape behaviors. Anxiety is associated with vigilance around future potential situations that may or may not arise and cautious or avoidant behaviors (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Children and adolescents who are anxious may experience any of the following symptomology:

Unrealistic/excessive worry, continuous need for reassurance, over-concern about past/present events, marked self-consciousness, complaints with no physical cause, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, distress on separation from parents, school refusal, panic attacks, avoidance, distress in social situations, phobias, and obsessions/compulsions (Dadds, Seinen, Roth, and Harnett, 2000, pp. 21).

The distinction between developmentally appropriate anxiety and a diagnosable anxiety disorder is made based on the severity and presence of the symptoms and the degree of impairment caused. Anxiety disorders are different from normative fears in that

they are excessive and persist beyond what is considered to be developmentally appropriate. In order to be diagnosed as an anxiety disorder, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* stipulates that persistence is defined as lasting six months or longer (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Government of Canada 2016). Features of anxiety disorders in children include a preoccupation with danger and active avoidance of these potentially dangerous and threatening situations (Jansen et al., 2012). Anxiety disorders are frequent in childhood and children with anxiety disorders are at high risk for meeting diagnostic criteria 8 years after the initial onset (Susa, Pitcia, & Bena, 2008).

Anxiety is among the most common psychiatric disorders in children, with rates between 9% and 32% in children and adolescents (Essau & Ollendick, 2013). Although beginning in childhood, anxiety continues to be associated with increased rates of other adverse mental health concerns in adulthood (Creswell et al., 2014; Jansen et al., 2012). The rate of anxiety and prevalence may in fact be higher than cited as many children and adolescents go undiagnosed and untreated (Neil & Christensen, 2007). Statistics from the Netherlands indicated that the prevalence of anxiety disorders in children is 20% and children with anxiety disorders are at higher risk for psychopathology throughout adulthood (Jansen et al., 2012). In Northern Uganda, the overall rates of anxiety disorders were 26.6%, with female rates of 29.7% and male rates of 23.1% (Abbo et al., 2013).

British Columbia research indicated that 14% of children in British Columbia have clinically significant mental health disorders (Waddell, McEwan, Shepherd, Offord, & Hua, 2005). Four percent of children in British Columbia between the ages of four and

17 meet the criteria for a clinical anxiety disorder, which equates to 25,000 children or 1-2 per classroom in British Columbia (MCFD, 2016). However, many more children struggle with an undiagnosed condition, and, of those diagnosed, one-third do not receive treatment (MCFD, 2016). Even though the types of anxiety children cope with varies, as do the impairments they struggle with, the overall rates of anxiety in British Columbia children is high.

The most common types of anxiety disorders in children are specific phobias, social anxiety disorder, separation anxiety, and generalized anxiety disorder (Jansen et al., 2012). Children with anxiety disorders demonstrate impairments in school performance; they have difficulty concentrating and completing homework and are less likely to complete secondary school than their nonanxious peers (Schoenfeld & Mathur, 2009). Impairments in other areas of functioning included family relationships, leisure activities, and social or peer relationships. (Ginsburg, Greca, & Silverman, 1998; Jansen et al., 2012). Children with anxiety disorders were less liked and more actively disliked than their classmates without anxiety. In addition to hindering social relationships, research indicated that anxious children are viewed as less assertive and more withdrawn by parents and teachers (Ginsburg et al., 1998). Anxiety disorders can persist throughout the lifespan and may impact educational and employment opportunities, substance use, and suicidality; children with clinical levels of anxiety are also at higher risk of developing psychopathology in adulthood (Jansen et al., 2012). Aside from all the difficulties faced by individuals struggling with anxiety, there is also a large financial impact on society. In 2008, the economic burden of anxiety disorders was estimated to

exceed \$51 billion dollars annually in Canada (Lim, Jacobs, Ohinmaa, Schopflocher, & Dewa 2008). Early treatment for anxiety has the potential to reduce symptomology as well as prevent future problems with psychopathology and substance abuse (Jansen et al., 2012).

Treatment

In spite of the astonishing number of children impacted by anxiety, the number of children accessing mental health services remains low. According to Waddell et al. (2005), 75% of children with anxiety do not access specialized mental health services. The lack of access to treatment by young people could be a result of lack of awareness or lack of knowledge about anxiety, lack of services available in the community, long wait lists for clinical services, or a lack of trained professionals to deliver the service (Creswell et al., 2014). Given the prevalence of anxiety, the adverse effects on individuals who struggle with anxiety, and the prevalence of comorbid disorders, the need to treat and prevent anxiety disorders is paramount.

Research on treatment of children's anxiety is relatively new; as of 20 years ago there was only a few single case studies, which entailed examining treatment of a specific fear in children. Rather, research focused on the externalizing behaviors of children, which was deemed more disruptive for families and for educators (Barrett, 2000).

There is convincing evidence that with good psychological treatment the majority of children and adolescents with anxiety will have favorable treatment outcomes (Minde, Roy, Bezonsky, & Hashemi, 2010). Evidence also exists for the efficacy of CBT in children (Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, & Goddard, 2008) aged 8 and older (Kendall et

al., 1994). CBT is a method of therapy that involved teaching clients the connection between thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Components of CBT include psycho-education about the nature of fears and anxiety, self-monitoring, exposure to the stimulus that invokes worry, cognitive restructuring around the worry thoughts, relaxation techniques, positive self-talk and relapse prevention (Otte, 2011).

Kendall published the first randomized trial using a CBT treatment program with anxious children. The results from Kendall's study indicated a significant improvement from pre to post treatment on self-report, parent report, and behavioral observations (Kendall, 1994). CBT with or without parental involvement is consistently identified as the most effective treatment for childhood anxiety (Jansen et al., 2012). CBT was considered the gold standard in psychotherapeutic treatment of anxiety (Otte, 2011).

Meta-analytic reviews of studies that used CBT to treat anxiety have generally found large effect sizes and therefore concluded that CBT is a highly effective intervention (Otte, 2011). Barrett, Dadds, and Rapee (1996) conducted a study on the efficacy of CBT in the treatment of children's anxiety. Children were randomly assigned to one of three groups, the CBT group, the CBT plus family group, and the wait list group. Results from this study indicated that at 12 months' post treatment, 70.3% of the CBT group and 95.6% of the CBT plus family group no longer met the diagnostic criteria for an anxiety disorder (Barrett et al., 1996). In another study as many as 70% of children with anxiety who completed CBT no longer met diagnostic criteria for an anxiety disorder (Schoenfeld & Mathur, 2009). CBT was found to be an effective treatment

modality in a four-year follow-up, for children ages 7 to 14 when used individually, with families, and in group therapy (Barrett, 1998).

Schoenfeld & Mathur (2009) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of CBT on inappropriate behavior, anxiety, and academic engagement. The researchers found that not only does CBT work for individual interventions but it is also an effective classroom based intervention to diminish anxiety symptoms in children and address counterproductive behavior patterns (Schoenfeld & Mathur, 2009). Other research also indicated that CBT is an effective universal classroom intervention and prevention strategy to diminish anxiety symptomology in children (Barrett & Turner, 2001).

Early Intervention and Prevention

Early intervention programs are those programs that target individuals at risk for developing a disorder or showing early signs or mild symptomology connected with the disorder. Prevention programs do not require an individual to show signs of the disorder or be at risk or for acquiring the disorder. The rationale for implementation of early intervention programs is that individuals who are emotionally resilient are less likely to develop anxiety disorders (Dadds, Seinen, Roth, & Harnett, 2000). Early intervention programs for anxiety focus on increasing emotional resiliency, self-regulation, self-confidence, problem solving skills and social supports/networks. Therefore, as children begin to have worries, they are able to stay confident and optimistic, deal with complex problems using problem solving methods and access social supports. This resiliency will make children less likely to develop an anxiety disorder in the future (Dadd et al., 2000).

Studies have indicated that anxiety disorders in early childhood and adolescence might be effectively prevented and treated through early intervention programs (Dadds et al., 2000). Research indicated that anxiety disorders are common in children and adolescence and present a risk for comorbid and lifelong psychiatric disorders. Neil & Christensen (2007) conducted a review of the value of prevention interventions in anxiety and found that in three-quarters of the trials there was a significant decrease in anxiety symptoms. In spite of the existence of evidence-based interventions that continue to demonstrate efficacy (Minde et al., 2010; Schoenfeld & Mathur, 2009; Jansen et al., 2008), anxiety disorders are still prevalent in pre-adolescent children (Cartwright-Hatton, McNicol, Doubleday, 2006). Furthermore, the majority of children and adolescents who have anxiety do not have access to treatment (Creswell et al., 2014; Waddell et al., 2008).

Effectiveness of School Based Universal Programs

Research indicated that the majority of children with anxiety aged 4 to 17 do not access clinical services (Waddell et al., 2005). This lack of access could be the result of lack of awareness, lack of knowledge of appropriate services, long wait lists, competing family time obligations, and the insufficient number of professionals (Creswell et al., 2014). Barriers that impede access to service include the time, location, and stigmatization associated with accessing mental health services, as well as transportation issues (Neil & Christensen, 2007; Stallard et al., 2007). These barriers could be eliminated through the use of universal school based interventions where CBT could be delivered to all children by nonclinical specialists (Creswell et al., 2014). Schools are an ideal setting for the implementation of mental health services, as all children have equal

access to services at no cost and in a setting that may be far less stigmatizing for families and much more approachable (Briesch et al., 2010). Neil and Christenson (2007) studied 20 school-based prevention and early intervention programs for anxiety and found that 78% of the programs used CBT. The rationale behind the use of CBT is attributed to schoolteachers being able to effectively implement the program, which is relatively robust in producing symptom reductions in school environments (Neil & Christensen, 2007). Schools not only have the access to children but are also able to reach children who have been previously unidentified and untreated.

If schools provide children and adolescents with universal early intervention programs, a number of problems would be solved including lessening the demand for community mental health services. Children would learn to implement their own coping skills and strategies and thus many would not need to access individual mental health services. Other advantages of universal interventions in schools include reducing recruitment, screening of students to enter community mental health services programming, and attrition difficulties (Neil & Christensen, 2007). These interventions can reach a broader range of children and adolescents who have experienced a range of difficulties and symptoms (Barrett, et al., 2006). A cost savings to government, employers, and individuals was also provided through decreased need for clinical treatment, as well as the decrease in social issues related to anxiety, which include underemployment, welfare, and lost productivity (Dadds et al., 2000; Neil & Christensen, 2007).

The results of the review conducted by Neil and Christensen (2007) support the value of prevention interventions for the treatment of anxiety. Over three-quarters of the

studies reviewed reported significant reductions in symptomology (Neil & Christensen, 2007). The number of research trials involving teacher program leaders who were successful in significantly reducing the symptoms of anxiety was higher than the number of trials involving mental health professionals who were similarly successful (Neil & Christensen, 2007). This disparity could be because teachers are able to incorporate the concepts and language throughout the curriculum as opposed to limiting it to the program sessions. The incorporation of the concepts and content throughout the curriculum does not detract from implementation fidelity but rather enhances it by generalizing the skills children learn to other aspects of their school day. As another advantage, these programs are also more sustainable and cost effective when run by classroom teachers (Neil & Christensen, 2007). Hence, there is value in using prevention interventions in schools to universally treat anxiety in children. One program that was found to be effective in treating anxiety, when used universally, was the FRIENDS program.

The FRIENDS Program

The FRIENDS program targets childhood anxiety and depression through the application of psychoeducation using CBT principles. The goal of the program is to use curriculum to build emotional resilience in children (Barrett & Turner, 2001). The program was written so classroom teachers can deliver it in a nonclinical universal group format where the stigma of experiencing anxiety is removed (Barrett, Lock, & Farrell, 2005). During the FRIENDS program lessons, children are taught that worries are normal and adaptive, and they learn how to manage them so they do not become maladaptive (Barrett, 2005).

The FRIENDS program is manual based, and classroom teachers in British Columbia are offered the training and subsequent program manuals free of charge. The curriculum consists of twelve 30 – 45 minute lessons that students receive at least weekly (Barrett, 2015). The manual provides teachers with detailed descriptions of developmentally appropriate activities for children to learn the skills entailed in the manual. Teachers are given the latitude to incorporate other materials they might find useful in teaching the concepts as long as they fit with the lesson objectives for the session. An essential component of the program is that the lessons are taught in the sequence as presented in the facilitator's manual. Lessons and concepts are built upon as progress is made through the curriculum. The program manual addresses the importance of booster sessions to review the content after completion of the program, as well as weekly home activities that children share with their families (Barrett, 2015). The continuity of the skills and consistency of language between home and school provide reinforcement of the child's skill acquisition (Briesch et al., 2010).

The FRIENDS program uses the Response to Intervention Model. This is a model that was first used for struggling learners; however, the level of supports were adapted for social, emotional, and behavioral programs as well (Pavri, 2010). When using this model in the scope of mental health programs, the three levels would include universal programs, targeted programs, and indicated programs. Universal programs (also known as tier one interventions or primary prevention interventions) are offered to all children regardless of individual symptoms. These programs are viewed as building effective skills in all children to increase their resilience and general mental health. Targeted, tier

two, or secondary interventions target children at risk of developing a disorder, or children who are currently showing symptoms of the disorder but do not yet meet diagnostic criteria. Children in this category are offered the intervention in a small group setting. Indicated programs, tier three interventions, or tertiary interventions are delivered to individuals with a diagnosed condition or a symptom presentation consistent with the disorder (Dadds et al., 2000; MCFD, 2016; Neil & Christensen, 2007).

The scope of implementation of the FRIENDS program within British Columbia incorporates the universal implementation level, where all children in the classroom receive the FRIENDS program lessons. Some schools will follow up and provide targeted or indicated interventions to students who require further instruction in order to understand the concepts and lessons taught. Likewise, other students may receive individual instruction prior to the class wide program to ensure understanding. Regardless of the manner in which the additional instruction is given, the FRIENDS program focus included a universal class wide application of the program (MCFD, 2016).

Positive results for group CBT interventions led to the creation of the FRIENDS program by Australian researcher, Dr. Paula Barrett. The program is skill-based and incorporated components that actively engaged family members in the acquisition of these skills. When completed in research trials, the FRIENDS program proved to be effective as a prevention program for children and adolescence with symptoms of anxiety (Barrett et al., 2001; Farrell et al., 2005; Minde et al., 2010; Stallard et al., 2005). It should however be noted that in these research trials, implementation protocols were in place and facilitators reported adherence with the implementation criteria set out in the

FRIENDS program. Numerous studies speak to the validity of the program in teaching children resilience and increasing their coping mechanisms; participants also experience a high level of satisfaction with the program (Stallard et al., 2007; Barrett et al., 2001). The efficacy of the FRIENDS program has been shown to be effective in reducing anxiety and depression in children within community and school settings as well.

The FRIENDS program has been proven to have efficacy in both community and school research trials. Within the community-based research, the program was delivered at a private psychology clinic. Seventy-three percent of participants who met criteria for an anxiety disorder before the intervention no longer met diagnostic criteria for an anxiety disorder, post treatment (Farrell et al., 2005). The FRIENDS program was found to reduce subjectively experienced symptoms of both anxiety and depression in self-referred clients within a community based setting, this demonstrated that the program was effective as a universal community based intervention (Farrell and Barrett, 2005). It should be noted that adherence to program protocols for interventions was followed and reported on, including the number and length of sessions, homework, and parent inclusion/participation and a parenting session. Stallard et al., (2007) found a significant decrease in anxiety and increase in self-esteem scores when school nurses administered the FRIENDS program in schools. This study utilized implementation criteria that followed the guidelines put forth in the FRIENDS program leader's manual. This study indicated that the program was effective in reducing anxiety and depression in children in a variety of settings, when program protocols regarding implementation were adhered to.

Results from a UK study also indicated the efficacy of the FRIENDS program with children from 9 to 10 years of age; these results highlighted a positive effect on emotional resilience, including reduced levels of anxiety and increased levels of self-esteem (Stallard et al., 2005). The children reported enjoying the program, learning new skills, and 40% of them stated they used those new skills to help a friend (Stallard et al., 2005). The reduction in anxiety and increase in self-esteem found at three months' post treatment remained consistent at twelve months' post treatment (Stallard, Simpson, Anderson & Goddard, 2008). Liddle and MacMillan (2010) found considerable success with the program; specifically, the authors found decreased levels of panic attacks, separation anxiety and obsessive-compulsive anxiety in children 9 to 14 years of age, after completing the program. The researchers also found a significant positive impact on the self-esteem levels of the participants; pre-treatment self-esteem scores were in the below average range while post-treatment self-esteem scores increased to the average range (Liddle & MacMillan, 2010). Further, results indicated that CBT based universal mental health programs delivered by nonmental health professionals had a positive impact on the emotional health of children (Liddle & MacMillan, 2010) and children with significant emotional problems can be helped through the use of universal programs (Stallard et al., 2007). Teachers noted a change in the climate of their classroom after the FRIENDS program; they stated anecdotally that the culture in their classrooms was more positive and supportive and children spoke openly of their worries and fears (Stallard et al., 2007).

The FRIENDS program met the standards set by the Society for Prevention Research; within seven Australian school based trials, there was consistent evidence for the efficacy and effectiveness of the program across a range of samples when facilitated by both classroom teachers and program designers (Dadds et al., 2000). Studies have indicated significant promise for the FRIENDS program as an effective intervention in reducing anxiety and depression in children when provided at any of the tiers of intervention. Further, studies indicated that the FRIENDS program was effective three years post treatment when delivered in classrooms by teachers as part of the regular school curriculum (Barrett et al., 2006; Neil & Christensen, 2007). The evidence is clear that when implemented with fidelity, the FRIENDS program reduced anxiety and depression in children.

Implementation and Fidelity

Developing interventions and programming is only the first step in improving health and well-being; those programs must be transferred into school settings and maintained there. This is a complicated and long-term process encompassing three steps: adoption in the school setting, implementation and sustainability (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). According to Neil and Christensen (2007), future research should focus on implementation of school-based prevention programs for anxiety with classroom teachers or associated staff to determine whether more training, guidance, or support could increase teacher confidence in the delivery of prevention programs, which would subsequently increase the intervention effects.

The difference between how a program was actually delivered versus how it was intended to be delivered by the program creators is referred to as *implementation variation* (Durlak, 2013). *Implementation fidelity* is the degree to which programs were implemented as intended (Carroll et al., 2007). When programs are not delivered according to program protocols, it could potentially waste time and resources by reducing the effect and potential for the program to help children and youth cope with their anxiety and worries. Furthermore, researchers are not able to determine if the issues around the efficacy of the program are related to the program itself or the manner in which it was implemented (Durlak, 2013; Forman 2015). Essentially, implementation fidelity can be seen as the moderator of the relationships between the intervention and the outcome (Carroll et al., 2007). Research focused on implementation advances research, practice, and policy, which ultimately leads to better outcomes for individuals accessing services (Durlak, 2013); better implementation practices lead to better outcomes (Forman, 2015).

Haataja, Ahtola, Poskiparta, and Salmivalli (2015) found that current data on the implementation of school based prevention programs tended to focus on school-level differences as opposed to the difference in implementation between teachers. Haataja and colleagues focused their research on antibullying programs to address the gap in the literature. The researchers took a person-centered view on implementation and determined between teacher differences in implementation practices. One prevalent factor in the research was the support of the school principal in the maintenance of high implementation levels; other factors associated with high implementation were found in

individual and interpersonal factors including personal belief in the program, and lesson preparedness (Haataja, et al., 2015).

Durlak and DuPre (2008) conducted a review of nearly 500 research studies between 1979 and 2006, on prevention and health programs for children and adolescents and found that program outcomes were reflective of the level of implementation achieved (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Durlak and DuPre (2008) stated that expecting near perfect implementation fidelity is unrealistic. The authors found that positive results were obtained with implementation levels of 60% and few studies had obtained implementation levels greater than 80%. Further Durlak & DuPre could not find one study that documented 100% implementation fidelity. There is marked variability in implementation between providers in the same study and there is extensive empirical evidence that levels of implementation affect program outcomes (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Therefore, although having good implementation fidelity was important, expecting perfect implement was unrealistic.

Achieving high implementation fidelity was one of the best ways to replicate the success that was achieved in original research, especially when this research was being brought from research trials to real world settings (Carroll et al., 2007). In considering the work of Durlak and DuPre (2008), achieving implementation fidelity of 80% was considered high. Minimally, programs need to achieve at least 60% implementation fidelity to obtain the program outcomes found in evidence-based trials. When programs implementation is low, it not only reduces the program's effectiveness but also wastes

resources because poorly implemented programs are unlikely to be successful (Durlak, 2013).

Summary and Conclusions

Anxiety is one of the most common psychiatric disorders in children and adolescents (Neil and Christensen, 2007; Waddell et al., 2008), and the prevalence has been noted worldwide including in studies in the United Kingdom, Australia, the Netherlands, Northern Uganda and North America. Children with anxiety have impairments in school performance, family relationships, leisure activities and social/peer relationships (Creswell et al., 2014; Jansen et al., 2012). Anxiety disorders can persist throughout individuals' lives and impact their educational and employment opportunities, substance use, and suicidality, as well as putting them at risk for psychopathology in adulthood (Jansen et al., 2012).

CBT is an evidence-based practice used to treat anxiety in individuals across their life span. CBT is used to teach individuals how their thoughts, feelings and behaviors impact their anxiety. Interventions using CBT provide psychoeducation about the nature of fears and anxiety, ways to challenge negative thinking patterns, how to manage larger tasks by focusing on small steps, how to relax the body and how to use self-monitoring techniques. Within CBT, gradual exposure to anxiety invoking situations was also taught (Otte, 2011). There was evidence for the efficacy of CBT when used to treat anxiety in children (Kendall et al., 2004; Stallard et al., 2010); however, an issue for many children and families was their ability to access these clinical services.

A number of barriers impede access to mental health services by young people, which could include lack of knowledge regarding symptoms, or time, location, transportation, or stigmatization associated with accessing services (Neil & Christensen, 2007; Stallard et al., 2007). These barriers could be eliminated through universal school-based interventions where CBT techniques are delivered to all children (Creswell et al., 2014). The FRIENDS program is an evidence-based practice that continues to yield positive results worldwide; posttreatment showed significant decrease in children's anxious, depressive symptomology, and an increase in their resiliency skills (Barrett et al., 2001; Stallard et al., 2007).

Although research has indicated that the FRIENDS program was evidence-based and yielded positive results in the treatment of anxiety, little was known about how the actual program was being implemented in schools in British Columbia. Were teachers able to implement the program as prescribed in their 1-day training, and did they feel like they had the support to do so in their classrooms? Were there other constraints that impacted teachers and their ability to implement the program with fidelity? Research demonstrated that there was a relationship between fidelity of program implementation and outcomes for participants (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). If programs have not been implemented as prescribed, then valuable learning time and precious resources are being wasted. This research addressed this gap in the literature.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the nature of the study. Specifically, I demonstrate the research design and rationale used to form the basis of this inquiry. I also discuss my role as the researcher, the research methodology I used, my data analysis plan, issues of

trustworthiness of the data, and the ethical procedures incorporated into the study. This information provides the reader with enough detail so they could replicate the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to understand how the FRIENDS program was implemented in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms in British Columbia, Canada. In this chapter I discuss the research questions, the study design, and the rationale for the study. I also discuss the role of the researcher, research methodology (including participant selection criteria), instrumentation, procedures for participant recruitment, data collection, the data analysis plan, issues regarding trustworthiness of the research, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions were:

RQ1: How do teachers describe their practice of implementation of the FRIENDS program in their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms?

RQ2: How does the individual teacher's practice of implementing the FRIENDS program differ from what is found in the program guidelines?

RQ3: Why do teachers make the decisions they do regarding implementation; are there factors that have impacted implementation and fidelity of implementation?

The central phenomenon being studied was how the FRIENDS program was implemented in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms and what factors impacted teachers' program implementation efforts and decisions. I sought to understand how teachers could be fully supported to implement the program as prescribed in order to achieve the statistically significant results found in clinical trials (Barrett et al., 2006; Barrett et al., 2007; Dadds

et al., 2000; Farrell et al., 2005; Liddle & McMillan, 2010; Neil & Christensen, 2007; Stallard et al., 2005; Stallard et al., 2007).

In educational research, a researcher can use a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodology. Each of these paradigms have within them several different strategies or approaches that provide direction on the actual procedures in the research design. For the purpose of this study, all types of research methodology were considered. There was no testing instrument already in place; therefore, conducting a quantitative analysis of variables used to understand implementation fidelity would involve creating and testing an instrument; this was outside of the viability of this study. I also considered qualitative methodologies. I investigated several approaches to qualitative inquiry including narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, and case study designs. Ultimately, I chose a case study design.

The qualitative research method used for this investigation was a case study design. The case study design allows researchers to either look at a single case or compare multiple cases. Case studies typically end with the researcher providing conclusions about the case that may include patterns, assertions, or explanations (Creswell, 2013).

Creswell (2013) stated that in case study research the case can be a concrete entity or something less concrete like a decision-making process. The purpose of this research was to identify how teachers had implemented the FRIENDS program; as such, a case study methodology was a valid approach to conducting this research. It is important to consider the context in which the decisions were made when attempting to understand the

implementation process. In this case, decisions were made in the school, classroom, and district; these settings were an important part of the equation that was addressed. The manner in which teachers implemented the program and any decisions they made regarding implementation were made in the context and setting in which they taught (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Yin (2014) provided further justification for the use of case study design by stating case study design was the preferred method of research when “the researcher has little control over the behavioral events and the focus of the study is a contemporary phenomenon” (Yin, 2014, p. 2). My study met the criteria listed by Yin (2014) as I had no control over teacher implementation of the FRIENDS program and implementation as it pertains to the program was a contemporary issue with little available information or history on the topic. Furthermore, case study methodology was appropriate because this study required I conducted an in-depth description of a social phenomenon (Yin, 2014).

Yin (2014) illustrated that in case study design, the research paradigm is achieved by following five steps that include: “developing appropriate research questions, stating any propositions, identifying units of analysis, linking data to the propositions and research questions, and establishing criteria for interpreting the findings” (Yin, 2014, p. 29). The sections below describe how I addressed each of these steps in this study.

The first step involved developing appropriate research questions. According to Yin (2014), this is one of the most important steps in a research study. Case study research tends to be most appropriate for research questions in the form of *how* or *why*

questions and are about explaining a present circumstance (Yin, 2014). To reiterate, the research questions explored in this study were:

RQ1: How do teachers describe their practice of implementation of the FRIENDS program in their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms?

RQ2: How does the individual teacher's practice of implementing the FRIENDS program differ from what is found in the program guidelines?

RQ3: Why do teachers make the decisions they do regarding implementation; are there factors that have impacted implementation and fidelity of implementation?

These research questions fit into the guidelines by Yin (2014) as appropriate questions to address using case study research. The questions were all *how* and *why* questions through which I sought to understand a social phenomenon within a present circumstance. In the literature, there is very little information on the factors that impact teacher implementation of the FRIENDS program. Once I had identified the research questions, the next step involved identifying propositions for the study.

According to Yin (2014), propositions direct the researcher to “something that should be examined within the scope of the research study” (p. 30). Propositions are helpful in case study research as they place limits on the scope of the research (Baxter & John, 2008). Propositions come from relevant research as well as the researcher's personal and professional experiences (Baxter & John, 2008). For the purpose of this research, the propositions were based on the findings of Haataja et al (2015) in their study of a school-based antibullying program. These propositions included (a) having support of school administration was instrumental in achieving high implementation levels, (b)

interpersonal factors such as the teacher's belief in the program impact implementation, and (c) individual differences such as a teachers' preparedness impact on implementation fidelity. Once the proposition was established, the units were determined.

In order to complete the third step in the case study paradigm, I identified the appropriate units of analysis. Yin (2014) stated that a unit of analysis is how the case or cases in the study will be defined. In thinking about what Yin (2014) referred to as a unit of analysis, I was interested in analyzing program implementation as an individual process in the context of the school and district where the program was being taught. Each case was composed of a single teacher who had completed the 1 day of teacher training put on by the MCFD, FRIENDS Program and had recently implemented the FRIENDS program into their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms or had completed implementation within the last calendar year. The data collected included interview data; each teacher was interviewed on two or three separate occasions. The focus was on the implementation process the teacher used as well as decisions the teacher had made in regards to implementation of the FRIENDS program.

The fourth step in the process was to link the data to the propositions and the research questions. According to Baxter & Jack (2008), initial propositions can be useful to assist the researcher in placing limits on the scope of the study. Initial propositions can come from existing literature, empirical data, or personal experience (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As noted, for the purpose of this research, the propositions were based on the findings of Haataja et al. (2015) in their study of a school-based antibullying program. The propositions included (a) having support of school administration was instrumental

in achieving high implementation levels, (b) interpersonal factors such as the teacher's belief in the program would impact implementation, and (c) individual differences such as a teachers' preparedness would have an impact on implementation fidelity. Prior to linking the data to the propositions and research questions, I looked at the data in its entirety several times without making any initial judgements (Creswell, 2013). This gave me insight into the collection of data prior to starting to individually code the interviews. During this process, I remained cognizant of the importance of maintaining a perspective of curiosity (Charmaz, 2008). The data was classified and coded based on the research questions. Each case was individually coded; a within case analysis was conducted prior to a between case analysis.

The fifth and final step in achieving the case study paradigm involved establishing criteria for interpreting the findings. In qualitative research, the researcher is not able to rely on statistics to demonstrate that the differences seen are in fact statistically significant. One method identified by Yin (2014) was to establish and account for any alternative explanations for the findings of the study. Addressing the alternative explanations became one of the criteria used to interpret the research findings and provide a stronger basis for the conclusions reached in the research (Yin, 2014). Another method used to interpret the findings was cross validation of the results based on hand coding and NVivo alignment. The data was hand coded first, prior to the computer assisted coding completed through NVivo. After the data was hand coded and then computer coded, the results were compared. The criteria for interpreting the findings is discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5 of this research study.

Another important factor included in case study research is binding the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). According to the Baxter & Jack (2008), binding a case is the act of placing boundaries around the case so it does not get too large. In this study, I bound the case by time, activity, location, and training. Only teachers who had completed the implementation of the FRIENDS program within the last calendar year were included. If the teacher was currently implementing the program for the first time, implementation must have been completed prior to June 2017; that is, the teacher was not planning to continue with the program in the fall of 2017 from where the teacher left off in June 2017. The case study was also bound by to location. All teachers included implemented the program in the same school district in British Columbia, Canada. Furthermore, the case study only included teachers who completed the 1-day teacher training provided by the FRIENDS program offered through MCFD in British Columbia. A final area of consideration in binding a case was the time between teacher interviews.

Teachers were interviewed multiple times until the point that saturation of data had been reached. After the first interview, subsequent interviews were scheduled as soon as possible while still accommodating the teacher's schedule. The majority of the subsequent interviews were scheduled within the week; however, in one case, due to holidays of the participant, the second interview was scheduled within 2 weeks. This period still allowed the information to be fresh in the teacher's mind during the second interview. During the subsequent interviews, member checking occurred. Teachers were all able to remember their comments and the meaning behind the comments; therefore, I determined that the time between interviews did not inhibit this process.

I focused on a multiple case study design. In this multiple case study design, I explored eight cases. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), when more than one case is studied, the process is referred to as a multiple case study design. As well as deciding to pursue a multiple case study design, I had a number of other roles that are important to address.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was one of a key data collection instrument, meaning that I did not rely on tests or instruments created by other researchers, but rather, collected data through conducting several interviews with individuals selected to be part of the study (Creswell, 2013). Initially I had planned to collect data through multiple interviews with each participant as well as completing document reviews. However, participants did not have data they had prepared for the purpose of their own implementation of the FRIENDS program. As such, I was only able to obtain data through the interview process. After the initial interview, subsequent interviews were set up with each individual participant until the point of saturation of data was reached and no new information, codes, or themes emerged from the data.

In order to obtain a purposeful sample I contacted all potential participants by e-mail. I explained the purpose of the study and the inclusion criteria. All participants interviewed met the inclusion criteria that had been set out. The inclusion criteria included:

1. Teachers who had completed the FRIENDS program teacher training.

2. Teachers who were currently in the process of implementing the FRIENDS program or had completed implementation in the last calendar year.
3. If teacher participants were currently implementing the program for the first time, they had to have completed implementation prior to June 2017. That is, the teacher was not planning to continue with implementation of the program, to the same group of children, in the fall.
4. Participants had to be implementing the program within the school district in which the study was taking place.

Teacher implementers were contacted through their school district e-mail; therefore, only individuals currently employed by the school district received the e-mail. Initially I had planned to use the maximum variation criteria in selecting a sample of the teachers who agreed to participate in the study. However, I had nine teachers volunteer to be part of the study, eight of which met inclusion criteria. I ended up interviewing all eight teachers who came forward, agreed to participate, and met inclusion criteria.

Individual interviews with participants resembled a guided conversation rather than a structured interview (Yin, 2014); within this process, I tried to listen more than I spoke. I asked general questions and listened carefully to the answers. I also asked probing questions in order to gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of the participants' thoughts, feelings and experiences. Within both the general questions and the prompting or probing questions, I made sure to ask questions in a way that put the participants at ease and did not make them feel defensive or uneasy. For example, instead of asking a why question, I asked, "how" questions and used statements like "tell me

more about.” My goal was to ensure that the participant felt comfortable and therefore able to share their true thoughts and feelings about their implementation process. During this process, I also used effective listening skills including empathic neutrality (Patton, 2015).

Empathic neutrality (Patton, 2015) refers to “understanding a person’s situation and perspective without judging the person and communicating that understanding with authenticity to build rapport, trust and openness” (Patton, 2015, p. 57). Coming from the background of being a Registered Clinical Counselor (RCC) within the province of British Columbia, I am trained in empathic neutrality and have practiced the skill for many years. By engaging in the process of empathic neutrality, I was able to minimize researcher bias, as my role as the researcher entailed understanding the perspective of the participants without judgement. This process was used during every interview or contact point with the participants.

I conducted 2 interviews with 3 of the participants and 3 interviews with 5 of the participants. The interview process with individual participants was considered completed when saturation of data was achieved; that is, no new information or themes emerged from the data. After the interview, I made a verbatim transcript of the audio recorded session. I then reviewed the transcript and started to create codes and themes from the data. I set up subsequent interviews with the participants to engage in the member checking process and ask any follow up questions that were not addressed in the interview or required further clarification.

As previously stated, the projected sample size was 4 or 5 participants, however, I ended up interviewing 8 participants. After my interview with participant number 7, I thought that I had reached saturation of codes and themes. I only had one more participant that came forward and stated that she would be interested in being interviewed. I decided to go ahead and interview participant number eight and this confirmed that I had reached saturation of data as no new codes or themes emerged. The sampling process was documented in my reflective journal, as was my decision making regarding the saturation of data during the interview process. This purposeful sample of participants was selected from the school district in which I am currently employed in.

Creswell (2014) cautions researchers not to engage in research within their own organizations, places of employment, or immediate work settings as this practice can compromise the researcher's ability to disclose information, the role of the researcher, or the participants. Creswell (2014) states that in situations where this cannot be prevented, it is incumbent on the researcher to demonstrate how the research will not be compromised. Further, the researcher must articulate how they will ensure the integrity of the research. Additionally, the researcher must demonstrate how the research was validated and therefore accurate.

In September 2016, I was hired on as an elementary behavior specialist for the school district the research took place in. This is an itinerant role, where service was provided to several elementary schools in the district. In this role, I am equivalent to a teacher and no supervisory relationship exists between myself and potential teacher participants in the study. The relationship between the researcher and potential

participants would best be described as collegial. Within my role at the school district the information gathered did not compromise my role or the role of any participants interviewed. Although participants would not be compromised through their participation in the study, the identity of participants was kept confidential and steps were taken to ensure their anonymity. As well as being employed by the school district, I also provide teacher training for the FRIENDS program.

I am also a provincial trainer with the FRIENDS program and to date, had provided one teacher training in this school district for the Grade 4 and 5 content. As such, the possibility existed that some of the teachers interviewed had received their initial training from me, and may have felt that their initial training impacted their program implementation. One option was to exclude participants who had taken their training from this researcher; however, this would have drastically limited the number of potential participants. In order to address this up front, I explained to the participants that the teacher training content was written by MCFD staff therefore any feedback on that training, as it impacted teacher implementation fidelity could be helpful and have far-reaching impact as the exact same training is offered in every district of the province. Further, participants were also given an option to provide anonymous written feedback; therefore, if they did feel uncomfortable sharing information regarding concerns they have with the teacher training they could use the anonymous feedback option. I provided each participant with a pre-addressed and stamped envelope that they could use to share any anonymous information regarding implementation of the program, or concerns regarding the teacher training. This was included in the participant information package I

provided which also included a copy of the information on confidentiality and privacy. I had no way of knowing who had chosen to submit feedback in this manner as the documents and envelopes were identical.

Neither of the researcher's roles, being a behavior specialist or provincial trainer with the FRIENDS program, placed the researcher in a power over relationship with any of the potential participants. The researcher ensured that participants were aware of the purpose of the study and how the information would be used. Furthermore, the process of member checking was completed with each participant to ensure the researcher's understanding of the participants' perspective was an accurate reflection of the participants' thoughts and feelings. Participants were given the opportunity to see how the data had been recorded and therefore see for themselves that their confidentiality had been protected and no personal identifying characteristics had been reported. It is important not only that teachers felt their information was kept confidential but also that the information they share would not compromise them in any way.

The information collected from this study did not impact individual teachers using the FRIENDS program. Being engaged in the program was a voluntary endeavor on the part of teachers, typically, because they saw value in the program or felt it would help some of their students with anxiety, copying, problem solving, friendship skills, self-regulation, or because they believed it would have a positive impact on the culture and climate of their classrooms. MCFD in the Province of British Columbia provided all the books for the program, so there was no financial output on the part of districts. Finally, the confidentiality of teachers was protected. Teachers were not identified by their name,

or the school(s) where they work. All teachers in the study were individuals that implemented the FRIENDS program in Grade 4 & 5 classrooms in the school district. Neither the researcher nor the district had a stake in controlling the outcome of the study; the purpose of the study was to obtain a true indication of the factors that helped and hindered full implementation from the perspective of teachers. With this knowledge, planning can take place to ensure that the groundwork for program implementation included factors that helped or hindered teacher implementation. If districts implement the FRIENDS program with fidelity they can expect to achieve the results found in clinical and research trials and have a positive social impact on students as they learned to manage symptomology connected with depression or anxiety (Barrett et al., 2010; Stallard, et al., 2008) and an increase in self-esteem (Stallard et al., 2005).

Methodology

Within a qualitative design, the emphasis is on gaining an in-depth understanding of information rich cases. As such, I utilized a purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2014). According to Patton (2015), an initial consideration in determining a sampling strategy was to first determine the units of analysis that would be used. This research entailed a person-focused unit of analysis and incorporated the criterion sampling strategy as explained above. Of the individuals who met the criterion, I had initially planned to use a maximum variation sampling strategy to achieve diverse perspectives on the research questions. However, I ended up having eight participants who agreed to participate in the study and interviewed all eight of them in spite of feeling that I had reached saturation of data after participant number seven.

In order to obtain a list of potential participants I received permission from the Superintendent of Schools to send an e-mail to all elementary teachers in the district. In the e-mail I informed teachers of my study, discussed the inclusion criteria and requested that any interested individuals contact me directly, via e-mail or my personal cell phone. Potential participants were asked if they met the inclusion criteria; that is, they had completed the 1-day teacher training and had recently completed implementation of the FRIENDS program in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms at a school within the specified school district.

After all appropriate consents were received from the Superintendent of Schools for the school district; I submitted my research application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Walden University. Permission to conduct this study was granted by the IRB (approval 07-07-0222-705) on July 7, 2017. After receiving this permission, I was now able recruit participants. In order to obtain a purposeful sample of teachers in the district, I sent an e-mail and consent form to all teaching staff in the school district, on July 10, 2017.

In relation to sample size, there are no rules but rather considerations the researcher must keep in mind (Patton, 2015). Some considerations included: what is the research trying to determine, what is at stake, and how many people are needed to ensure credibility? Another important factor considered was available time and resources. This research study was intended to be time limited but it needed to be thorough enough to ensure that the results influenced the research community, educational system and the

children involved in the program, to meet the ultimate goal of creating positive social change.

In this research, I focused on conducting an in-depth study with a small group of people who fit the criteria I had set out, and who could provide rich information on the subject matter. There is an inverse relationship between the amount of information gathered from a participant and the number of participants needed (Patton, 2015). That is, the more in depth the interviews, the smaller the number of participants needed to conduct the study. I had projected that a sample of four or five participants would be sufficient given the in-depth nature of the interviews.

I initially focused on a sample size of four or five teachers; however, I remained cognizant that the sample size was meant to be flexible and emergent. The initial number of four or five participants was chosen because the FRIENDS program was not fully adopted in the specific school district and 2016/2017 was the first year the district had an in house trainer. Since the FRIENDS program was launched in British Columbia in 2004, there have only been 52 teachers from this district who had been trained and were currently still employed by the district. Given the limited number of trained teachers within the district, that only a portion of those would be teaching Grade 4 and 5 this year, and of those, only a portion would be implementing the FRIENDS program within their classrooms, the projected sample size was deemed appropriate. However, at this point in the research, the sample size was merely a projection. A purposeful sampling strategy was used to select teacher implementers who could provide a “substantial contribution to this study”; these teachers could provide insight on the structure and character”

(Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 130) of the experience of teachers, who have implemented the FRIENDS program in their grade 4 and 5 classrooms.

Within an emergent design, I started with the proposed sample size of four or five. Through the interview process, it became clear that after interviewing the fifth participant, I had not reached saturation of the data and that I would benefit from speaking to other teachers who had experience implementing the program and therefore in-depth knowledge that would benefit the study. Creswell (2013) cautions researchers conducting case study design to limit the number of cases within the study; as the number of cases, increases the results become more diluted. Creswell's (2013) caution was included as a factor in deciding whether to increase the sample size.

Given the small sample size in this research, the sample size may be under scrutiny from the researcher's committee as well as the university. In order to be transparent within the process of sample selection I fully documented all sampling procedures and decisions in my reflective journal. I considered the emergent design of the research as well as decisions to increase my sample size. Within my reflective journal, I included information regarding saturation of ideas and themes. The sample size was increased from four or five because I did not feel that I had reached saturation of data after participant number 5. Further, I wondered if all potential participants had come forward as I did not send my initial e-mail until after summer holidays had started. Therefore, teachers may have been away or not accessing their e-mail. I had completed 5 interviews during the summer holidays and continued with interviews after the school year started up again in September.

In September 2017, I sent out a subsequent e-mail to all teaching staff explaining my research and asking individuals who were willing to participate to contact me. Initially I had 2 volunteers that came forward. I interviewed both of these participants. During my 7th participant interview I felt that I had reached saturation of themes and codes. During this time, I had one more teacher contact me. I decided to complete an 8th interview which confirmed that I had in fact reached saturation of data as no new codes or themes came forward.

The confidentiality of the participants was protected by using randomly generated numbers in the data which participants have been individually assigned. The data sheet which correlated numbers to names was stored separately from the data on a password protected flash drive. Participants were identified only through the use of this five-digit code on any notes regarding their interviews, as well as the verbatim transcripts of their interview sessions. For the ease of citing references in Chapter 4, the five-digit randomly generated numbers were then randomly transferred into numbers between 01 and 08.

At the beginning of each interview, I checked with the participants to ensure they were comfortable with the session being recorded as well as the researcher taking notes. The participant was reminded that they would be given the opportunity to review the researcher's notes and transcripts of the session(s) and engage in the member checking process. The researcher's notes included any thoughts or queries I had that emerge during the process, as well as potential themes or subsequent questions asked. I made a verbatim transcript of each interview after the interview session. This allowed me to easily determine saturation of data. I knew when saturation had been reached as teacher

participants were not adding any new information to the study; there was no new codes or themes were emerging from the coding process (Patton, 2015).

Instruments used within the study included interview protocols, interview audio tapes, interview verbatim transcripts, and the researcher's reflective journal. The protocols for the interviews were researcher produced. I reviewed the facilitator training manual to determine the information passed onto teachers in their one-day training and any instructions they received regarding program delivery. The program instructions included the necessary content, sequence and time frame for delivery of the material. This information allowed the researcher to compare how the teacher implemented the program compared with how the program was intended to be implemented. Participants were asked to provide any documents they created for use with the program, participants all stated that they had not augmented the material with any documents they individually created, but rather, on an ad hoc basis, would use you tube video clips or information from other programs.

The research questions guided the interview (see appendix A) however probing and clarifying questions were also used as necessary to obtain thorough responses from the participants and to fully understand their individual perspectives. The questions for the subsequent interviews were based on the information that was obtained during the first interview as well as any additional queries I had based on the information that was or was not shared. By typing out the verbatim transcript after the interview, I had insight on further areas of inquiry for the individual participants during their subsequent interviews.

Data was also collected during the member checking process. The member-checking process was meant to ensure that the notes taken by the researcher were an accurate reflection of the views and opinions of the participant. The first portion of the second interview was used for member checking followed by further questions. This process continued to the point of saturation with the final interview only including member checking, and no subsequent questions.

Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative research is a form of research that is not comprised of separate and distinct steps, but rather, interrelated steps that occur simultaneously (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) described this process using a spiral image that demonstrates how the process of research is about moving in analytic circles rather than linear approaches that are consistent with quantitative data analysis (Creswell, 2013).

The first step of data analysis within this qualitative design included getting a sense of the entirety of the raw data; this was achieved by reviewing all raw data several times without making judgements or speculations (Creswell, 2013). Through this process I attempted to gain insight into the complete collection of data prior to starting to individually code the interviews. I maintained a perspective of curiosity, wondering what codes and themes would emerge from the data set (Charmaz, 2008). The next step in this process involved organizing the data and preparing for data analysis. I read the data again and started to put notes in the margins about general thoughts regarding the data. I then started to classify and interpret the data; this was where I began to form codes and develop categories of emergent information. I used the direct interpretation method where

I looked at the case as a single entity and began to draw codes and themes out of the case (Yin, 2014). In this process I looked for patterns and determined if any of the within case emerging themes were connected to one another. Once a within-case analysis had been completed, I then conducted a thematic cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2013).

A codebook was created with a list of codes and definitions for each. The codebook was comprised of a short list of tentative codes; Creswell (2013) suggested that a researcher begin with 25 to 30 and cautions beginner researchers to be cognizant of not developing an extensive list of codes as this becomes far too difficult to manage. The code labels emerged from the data and employed the actual words participants used or a word that sums up the description provided by the participants. I continued with data collection until the point of saturation was reached; that is, no new information was brought forward. This is the reason I did not plan for a specific number of interview participants, as this number was based solely on saturation.

Creswell (2014) stated that as well as coding information it is important to develop themes or categories that reflect the information collected. The categories comprised of subcategories or properties; these represented multiple perspectives about the category. These categories were placed on a continuum that characterized the process of implementation of the FRIENDS program in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms. The researcher then reviewed the data and picked out a central theme; that is, the theme that had been the most prevalent through the data analysis. Saldana (2009) provided a great visual on how the researcher starts with codes and then identifies categories, followed by sub-categories and eventually themes. The themes ultimately described the experience of participants

when it came to implementing the FRIENDS program. If a case was deemed to be an outlier, I planned to report on it within the study. Although no individual case was deemed an outlier, there were individual themes that came up which were outliers and were subsequently reported on in the data analysis.

A difficulty in case study design or other qualitative analysis was making sense of the vast amount of data. The process started with sifting through the data to determine the range of trivial to significant. The next step involved identifying significant or emergent patterns within the data. Finally, I constructed a framework that allowed me to effectively and accurately communicate the results (Creswell, 2013).

A computer was used for data storage and analysis because of the vast amount of new information that the researcher needed to keep track of and organize. Qualitative software programs facilitate data storage, analysis, retrieval, coding, comparing, and identifying links (Patton, 2015). Further, qualitative software programs provide an organized storage system where the researcher could quickly locate or search files in one place. If one chooses to use concept mapping then this provides the researcher with a way to visualize the relationship between different codes as well as draw a visual representation of the data. Some disadvantages of using software included having to learn a new computer program, increased mediation between the researcher and the data, difficulty in moving data categories around during analysis and potential difficulty of finding one program that specifically meets your needs as a researcher (Creswell, 2013).

The recorded interviews from the participants were transcribed into verbatim transcripts; these transcripts were used to complete the process of coding, initially by

hand, through a line by line analysis and then through the use of computer assisted software, NVivo. Initially, I completed a within case analysis of the codes, themes, and subthemes that emerged, followed by a between case analysis. This allowed me to determine when I had reached the point of saturation of codes and themes and no new data was arising from the interviews. This process is explained in more detail in the following section.

Coding of the data was done manually for the purpose of accuracy and reliability. The themes that were identified from the data of semistructured interviews; this included participant views regarding implementation of the FRIENDS program, their decisions regarding implementation of the program, implementation practices, challenges, and factors impacting teacher implementation practices. The process of manually coding the data based on the verbatim transcripts was helpful in the identification of specific information related to the research questions. Further this process assisted in extracting relevant information from the interview transcripts and conducting a within case analysis, followed by a cross case analysis. The manual coding approach was further enhanced by the use of NVivo 11 software system.

NVivo is a computer aided software package specifically used for the qualitative data analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). This software was developed by Tom Richards in 1999 and is produced by QSR International. NVivo was specifically designed to facilitate and assist qualitative researchers to manage information rich data, manage ideas, query data, visualize data and report on it (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). A variety of research methods and techniques were facilitated by NVivo software such as discourse

analysis, grounded theory, action or evidence-based research, ethnography, phenomenology, network and organizational analysis, literature review, conversation analysis, framework methodology, and mixed methods research. Furthermore, a variety of formats are also supported by the NVivo; these include audio files, word, digital photos, videos, .pdf, rich text, spreadsheets, web or social media data, and simple plain texts. The software provides the service of auto coding through the software's pattern based system to automatically code the transcribed data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Auto coding was used to determine the frequency of words or phrases that have been found in the raw data.

The use of computer assisted software such as NVivo can contribute to a more rigorous analysis of the data however it is important that the researcher remains the main instrument in the study and the computer assisted software assists the researcher, as opposed to taking over the job of the researcher (Baxter & Jackson, 2013). With this in mind, I first hand coded the data. The thematically grouped data from the transcribed semistructured interviews was then loaded in narrative and tabular form. The integration of quotes from participants was used in the narrative of this study to demonstrate the specific themes and concepts and their links to the data. In order to achieve the assessment of descriptive data the content analysis technique was applied to analyze the thematically grouped interview data for the extraction of empirical findings (Trochim & Donnelley, 2008).

The qualitative content analysis technique was applied to the coded data using NVivo 11 software. Content analysis can be defined as "a wide and heterogeneous set of

manual or computer-assisted techniques for contextualized interpretations of documents produced by communication processes in the strict sense of that phrase” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). This can include any kind of text, whether written, iconic or multimedia with the ultimate goal of producing valid and trustworthy references. Content analysis can be used with diversified research approaches and sets of methods for studying and/or retrieving meaningful information from large amounts of data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

A large amount of textual information was collected from the participants through semi-structured interviews. The technique of content analysis helped to identify the unique properties of this information in a systematic manner. Such properties were frequencies of most used key words within the content of communication. Hence, the categorization of this large amount of textual information presented in meaningful way was important as it formed the bases for identifying the findings, which emerged from the data. The coding frame used to analyze the large amount of textual data was linked with the variables that could affect and influence the content within the text (Stemler, 2001).

The basic justification and assumption behind the adoption of the content analysis technique was in fact that one was able to reflect on the importance of the words within the text. Hence, I assumed that the important matters and concerns within the communication were traced through the most used words and phrases. In this current study, I conducted verbal interviews and that data was converted into textual documents through transcription. Categorization and classification of this type of communication provided the context for content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004).

NVivo allows the researcher to manage, shape and analyze qualitative data (Creswell, 2013). The researcher can manipulate the data, conduct a variety of searches, and create a graphic display of the codes and categories. This software package provided a demonstration that allowed me to see and try out the different features and make an informed decision regarding whether or not to move forward with this software for my research. The software was not meant to complete the analysis on its own but rather was a tool or assistant of sorts (Yin, 2014). In this research, the NVivo software was used as a tool to determine the accuracy of hand coded results.

I used this software to code the data after the process of hand coding was completed. I was then able to compare the results from hand coding and computer coding. If the results were similar with both forms of coding, then this highlighted the accuracy of the results. As such, I remained the main analyst in this study and the computer assisted software assisted in my research.

Issues of Trustworthiness

I used several strategies to improve the credibility and replicability of this study. I have shared my own personal experience being both a provincial trainer for the FRIENDS program as well as a district behavior specialist within the school district. Furthermore, I shared my own personal belief that some teachers decide to implement the FRIENDS program with the best of intentions and then became swayed by other curricular demands. I am cognizant that my background shapes my personal interpretations. By being transparent and engaging in the strategies below, I ensured that

my own personal bias was not the lens through which the personal experiences of the participants were defined.

Member checking is a strategy I used that assists the researcher to test the veracity of the data, the codes, and any interpretations or conclusions that emerged from the data with the participants to ensure that my interpretation was reflective of the participants' perspective and not tainted by personal bias (Baxter & Jack 2008). Saturation of themes was another strategy that I used to increase the credibility and replicability of conclusions. I knew when sufficient data was collected as no further themes were emerging. Further, I used thick descriptors to convey the findings of my study (Creswell, 2014).

In order to ensure reliability I documented the procedures within the case study so another researcher could replicate the study (Yin, 2014). The verbatim transcripts were checked to ensure accuracy (Creswell, 2014). The codebook also assisted with increasing reliability; the codebook was constantly compared to the data with detailed notes on how the code was derived or amended. In order to ensure dependability of the data within the study, the data was triangulated from different data sources; this would form the justification for the emergence of themes as the themes are not just formed from a single source of data (Creswell, 2014). Another strategy that was used to ensure dependability of the data was the creation of an audit trail. Within an audit trail, the researcher keeps records of all raw data, documentation of the data analysis process and synthesis including notes regarding the methodological process, reflective notes, and journal entries incorporating the researcher's thoughts throughout the process (Creswell, 2014).

Ethical Procedures

Permission to approach participants for this study was obtained through the superintendent for the school district in British Columbia, Canada. Further, the superintendent also gave access to an e-mail list, which included all elementary teachers. Potential participants were asked to contact me directly, and I asked questions to ensure they meet the criteria for the study, that is, they were currently a teacher in the school district, have been trained in the Grade 4/5 Friends program, and have implemented the program in Grade 4/5 classrooms. If teachers were implementing the program for the first time, they would have to have completed implementation prior to June 30, 2017, that is, they did not plan to continue with implementation to the same group of students in September 2017.

In order to protect human subjects within this case study I obtained informed consent from everyone who agreed to be a participant in the study. I advised participants of confidentiality and privacy at the beginning of their interview session. Furthermore, participants were given information on their right to withdraw from the study at any point. Participants were also informed of how the data would be stored, that I was the only person who had access to the data, as well as the steps taken to maintain participant privacy.

The confidentiality and privacy of participants was fully protected; no identifiable characteristics were disclosed (Yin, 2014) within the study. Given it was a small district the writer did not disclose the school where the teacher worked as there are very few teachers at each school teaching this grade level. Furthermore, even if there were several

teachers teaching Grade 4 and 5 at the same school, there was a very good possibility that only a fraction of them would be trained in the FRIENDS program. Confidentiality and privacy was further protected by using a randomly assigned number to identify participants within the study.

Participants were advised that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point, and should they decide that they wanted to, I would completely respect their decision. Participants were advised that they had the right to have any contributions to date deleted or just not participate further. Within the process of informed consent, I discussed the issue of data storage and that the participants would only be identified in the notes using their randomly selected number. I also advised participants that the database containing the name and number of participants would be stored separately from the researcher's notes in a locked cabinet.

The researcher was up front and honest with participants and did not engage in any deceptive practices (Yin, 2014). This researcher had decided that involving children in this study was outside of the scope and preveue of the research; there are no other vulnerable groups identified within the study. Individuals in the study could have economic issues or be pregnant. This is not information that would be shared with me as part of recruitment. If the information had become known during the course of the interview, the interview would be terminated.

I had decided to use small incentive, a resource that was considered supplemental to the program. I decided to buy each participant a copy of the resource "Yoga Pretzels for Kids" by Tara Guber. The resource cost \$15.42 each. The resource was given to the

teachers during their final interview. Each participant received the exact same resource. The incentive was a thank you to participants for their time and contribution as well as provide them with a resource, which would enhance their delivery of the program.

In this research I followed the guidelines put forth by the American Psychological Association regarding retention of records, specifically, I will keep all records pertaining to this research, for 7 years (American Psychological Association, 2017). During this timeframe, the database that contains participants' names and corresponding identification numbers, as well as the password protected flash drive will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. The password protected flash drive contains the only electronic copy of the participant names and corresponding identification numbers. I am the only person who will retain a key to the locked filing cabinet. Once the timeframe has passed, I will shred the paper files and delete the flash drive.

Summary and Conclusions

In chapter 3, I provided a detailed description for the methodology that I used to conduct this research study. Specifically, I used a multiple case study design to understand how the FRIENDS program was implemented in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms in a school district in British Columbia, Canada. After establishing the rationale for the case study design, I discussed my role within the study, the participant selection criteria, instrumentation, how the participants were recruited, and how I collected and analyzed the data. I concluded the chapter with a discussion regarding the trustworthiness of the research and the ethical procedures used to gain access to participants and ensure their

confidentiality and well-being. In chapter four the data analysis and findings of the study are presented.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how teachers implemented the FRIENDS program in classrooms. Specifically, I was interested in addressing the gap in the literature regarding implementation of the FRIENDS program in classrooms and whether teachers followed the implementation guidelines, they learned in their 1-day teacher training. Further, this research was designed to determine if there were constraints that limited or affected a teacher's ability to implement the program as intended by the program creators. The central question of the research project was how the FRIENDS program was being implemented in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms and the factors that impacted implementing the program with fidelity for teachers. To determine the quality of implementation of the FRIENDS program, the following three research questions were examined:

RQ1: How do teachers describe their practice of implementation of the FRIENDS program in their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms?

RQ2: How does the individual teacher's practice of implementing the FRIENDS program differ from what is found in the program guidelines?

RQ3: Why do teachers make the decisions they do regarding implementation; are there factors that have impacted implementation and fidelity of implementation?

A qualitative research methodology was employed to address the research questions. I used semistructured interviews to gather information from a purposeful sample made up of teachers who had completed the 1-day teacher training, had

completed program implementation in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms, and had volunteered to be part of this study. The semistructured interviews (see Appendix A) were in alignment with the research questions for the study. The purposively selected participants provided their responses according to their personal experiences and knowledge of the FRIENDS program and their own personal implementation practices. I employed qualitative research methods to determine codes and themes inherent in the data and establish the evidential findings for the study. The qualitative methods used included hand coding of the results as well as using NVivo 11 to ensure the reliability of results garnered through the hand coding process. In this chapter, I report the results from this qualitative case study.

Potential Issues Within the Setting

In November 2016, the British Columbia Teachers Federation won a legal decision in a Supreme Court of Canada hearing regarding classroom size and composition. By September of 2017, the process of creating classrooms and allocating support had changed from the process that had traditionally been used. This shift caused some teachers apprehension, and anxiety regarding what the new process would look like, and what it would mean for them, their colleagues and their students.

Demographics

There were a total of eight teachers interviewed for the study; of the eight participants, two were male and six were female. The teaching experience ranged from 3 to 33 years of experience, with the mean being 16.38 years of teaching experience. Four of the participants' self-identified as being teachers; one self-identified as being a

teacher/administrator; one self-identified as being a school counselor; one self-identified as being a school counselor/teacher; and one self-identified as being a district itinerant teacher. The age range for participants was between 30 and 57 years of age. All participants had a bachelor's degree and were professionally certified as a teacher in British Columbia. Participants also reported having completed their 1-day teacher training in the FRIENDS program between the years of 2007 and 2016. Numerical participant codes were used for ease in analyzing and describing the results; they are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Coding of Participants

Participants ID	Code
***88	P 01
***70	P 02
***36	P 03
***63	P 04
***93	P 05
***87	P 06
***71	P 07
***73	P 08

Data Collection and Storage

Eight participants who met inclusion criteria came forward and agreed to participate in this study. All eight of the participants were interviewed. The interviews took place in school district buildings and were recorded using a microcassette recorder. For five of the participants there were three data collection events and for three of the participants there were two data collection events. The first data collection event for all

participants was the initial semistructured interview as outlined in Chapter 3. The second data collection event was a member-checking interview with each participant where a transcript of the initial interview was reviewed as well the initial codes and themes that emerged. If follow-up questions were asked during the second data collection event, then a third data collection event was scheduled and conducted. By the end of data collection, each participant had been interviewed individually on at least two occasions, and all had stated that my understanding of their experience was accurate.

There were 21 interviews conducted with the eight participants between the dates of July 10, 2017, and October 4, 2017. Five participants were recruited through my initial e-mail request on July 9, 2017. The remaining three participants were recruited after I sent a second request for participants on September 6, 2017. Table 2 illustrates the number and length of interviews per participant.

Table 2

Length of Participant Interviews

Participant #	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Total time
01	35 min	25 min		55 min
02	60 min	35 min	20 min	115 min
03	60 min	45 min	20 min	125 min
04	45 min	30 min	15 min	90 min
05	40 min	25 min		65 min
06	40 min	25 min	15 min	80 min
07	35 min	25 min		60 min
08	45 min	25 min	15 min	85 min

All of the data collected was stored on a password protected USB drive. The USB drive was stored in a lock box and a locked filing cabinet. I personally transcribed all of

the tapes as soon after the interview as possible and always within the day. Once the transcription was completed, I personally destroyed the tape. It should be noted that no identifying information was used in the transcription, and all participants were identified using a five digit randomly generated number. The consent forms were signed by the participants during the first data collection event and were filed in a separate locked filing cabinet only accessible to me.

General Observations from the Researcher

The participants all appeared eager and willing to engage in the study and to be interviewed as many times as necessary to ensure that I had a thorough understanding of their experiences with implementing the FRIENDS program. Participants wanted to ensure that the results of this study would be shared with management in the school district as well as the FRIENDS program. It was important to participants that policy and procedures acknowledge the importance of implementing evidence-based programs with fidelity and ensure teachers were supported to achieve this goal. The participants all willingly gave up their own time to be a part of the study, and all expressed interest in meeting with me upon conclusion of the study to learn about the results.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for my study was done through analysis of the verbatim transcripts produced through the 21 interviews with eight participants. The semistructured interviews consisted of eight questions, and each question in the interview was designed to answer at least one research question in the study. Furthermore, a few of the questions in the interview were broken down into three to four subquestions to cover the purpose

and research questions in this qualitative study. Hence, a total of 13 questions were incorporated into the semistructured interview process. I ensured that all of the research questions were covered through the semistructured interview questions as this was the only research instrument used in this case study. All of the data used for the purpose of the analysis came from conducting an analysis of participant responses to the semistructured interviews. Participant interviews were first hand coded and then coded through the use of NVivo data analysis software. The results are captured in the results section below. However, prior to engaging in a discussion regarding the results of this study, it was important to establish evidence of trustworthiness of the data. Evidence of trustworthiness can be determined by looking at four different factors: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability of the results and research process (Yinn, 2014). It is important to keep these factors in mind when looking at the results of a study. Therefore, in the following section, I will detail these four factors and the strategies used to ensure trustworthiness with this study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The study followed procedures to ensure accuracy of data and evidence of trustworthiness. The data that was collected was in the form of interviews using the semistructured interview questions in Appendix A. The participants in this study were chosen based on meeting the inclusion criteria I had set out and their willingness to participate in the study. In order to address the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, the following procedures were adhered to.

Credibility is the process of ensuring that a true picture of the phenomena of the study is reflected in the results (Shenton, 2004). I implemented several processes to increase credibility in this study. These processes included steps taken with the participants to establish a relationship of trust ensuring participants were aware of their right to not participate in the study or withdraw at any time and to provide a way for participants to give anonymous feedback if they did not feel comfortable sharing certain aspects of their implementation process with me. Other strategies used to increase credibility included keeping a reflective journal, using a random sampling method, and ensuring saturation of themes before concluding data collection.

I was also able to gain familiarity with the culture of the organization, as I am an employee. Further, as a provincial trainer with the FRIENDS program, I have also had prolonged exposure to the course content and materials. This was helpful in fully understanding the participant's perspective because of my knowledge of the program and the organization in which the participant worked. As a result, I was able to establish a relationship of trust with the participants who chose to engage in the study. Shenton (2004) states that another tactic to ensure honesty is to give participants the space to refuse to participate; this ensures that those who chose to participate are genuinely interested in taking part and sharing their experiences freely (Shenton, 2004). During the gathering of informed consent, participants were given the space to refuse to engage in the study. In addition, participants were advised of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. In their initial information package, participants were provided with a self-

addressed stamped envelope should they have feedback they wanted to share but did not feel comfortable discussing in person.

Although the two roles I had in the district and as a provincial trainer allowed me to build trust with participants through my knowledge and understanding of the organization and the program, potential biases and conflicts could also arise. As a result, I kept a reflective journal throughout the process. The reflective journal was a way of addressing my thoughts that arose and ensuring personal bias was not tainting my research. The sampling method I chose was another way of negating research bias in the selection of participants. An e-mail was sent to all teachers in the school district explaining the research and inclusion criteria. Individuals who were interested in participating were asked to contact me directly. Subsequently, I interviewed every potential participant who came forward. Saturation of themes is another strategy that was used to increase the credibility of the conclusions. I engaged in data collection until I reached saturation of themes emerging from the data. When I finished interviewing participant number 7, I felt I had reached saturation of themes; however, there was only one other person who had come forward to be interviewed, so I decided to interview this participant as well. This final interview confirmed that I had in fact reached saturation of themes, as no further themes were emerging from the data. I had also planned to report on any discrepant cases; however, no discrepant cases emerged through the data collection process. Transferability was another issue I considered under the umbrella of trustworthiness of my research and findings.

In order to ensure transferability, I provided details on the setting in which the data was collected and gave thorough information on the organizational factors that could have impacted my ability to obtain a larger sample of participants. I also provided full details on the number of participants involved in the study and demographic information of the participants including their ages, gender, educational backgrounds and teaching experience. I fully discussed the data collection methods that were employed and the number and length of interviews with each participant as well as the time period through which the data was collected. Context was also provided regarding the size of the school district and the number of teaching staff therein and the number of teachers in the district that were currently trained in the FRIENDS program. Another factor to consider in trustworthiness is dependability, which according to Shenton, can be difficult in qualitative work (2004).

Regardless of the dependability criterion being more difficult to achieve in qualitative work (Shenton, 2004), it is incumbent on the researcher to ensure future researchers are able to repeat the study (Yin, 2014). For a study to have dependability, it means that if the research were repeated in the same context, with the same participants and methods, then similar results would be obtained (Yin 2014; Shenton, 2004). In order to address the issue of dependability I provided information on the context of the study, that is, the district itself. I also provided information on the process of recruiting participants, the demographics of the participants, the location, frequency and the duration of data collection. I provided enough detail that future researchers have a prototype of my study and therefore can repeat it. Another strategy I used to ensure

dependability of the data was creating an audit trail. In order to maintain an audit trail, I kept records of all the raw data and documented my data analysis process, reflective notes and journal entries that included my thoughts throughout the process (Creswell, 2014). The final factor to consider under evidence of trustworthiness is confirmability.

Confirmability of research indicates that the results from the study are indicative of the data and not a result of any preconceived notions or preferences from the researcher. In order to ensure confirmability of the data I engaged in the member checking process (Shenton, 2004). Member checking is a strategy where the researcher is able to test the veracity of the data, the codes that emerged, and any interpretations, to ensure they are reflective of the participant's perspective and were not tainted by personal bias on the part of the researcher (Baxter & Jack 2008). In order to engage in the process of member checking upon completion of an audio recorded interview, I transcribed the recording into verbatim notes of the interview session. From there I conducted a line by line analysis of the data and engaged in the process of hand coding the data to identify the themes and codes that emerged. I met with the participant and reviewed my notes, and the codes and themes that emerged during their interview. Further, I also asked any subsequent questions that emerged through the process of data analysis. If new information was brought forward during interview number 2, then the member checking process was repeated during interview 3. If during interview number 2, the interviewees confirmed the information I brought forward, and no other questions were asked, then no further interviews were deemed necessary. Based on the criteria for evidence for trustworthiness and the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness, transferability,

dependability and confirmability the following results are believed to be valid and reliable in answering the research questions investigated.

Results of the Study

The intent of this qualitative, multiple case study was to identify key themes that spoke to the lived experiences of Grade 4 and 5 teachers during their implementation of the FRIENDS program. This study sought to give teachers the opportunity to tell their stories about their own implementation practices within the FRIENDS program and determine how teacher's implementation practices differ from the implementation guidelines as prescribed in their one-day teacher training. The findings below are sectioned by research question; each research question is followed by the themes, which emerged during the interviews. Specific comments made by participants are presented to show evidence for and strengthen the identified theme. Further some NVivo results are also presented, as are excerpts from my reflective journal that I kept during the process of coding.

The following sections provide data to answer RQ1: How do teachers describe their practice of implementation of the FRIENDS program in their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms? Fifty percent of the participants felt that within their role in the school district, their job included supporting classroom teachers to implement the FRIENDS program. Within this section, I have also included the information shared by participants on the modules within the FRIENDS program and the perceived level of difficulty or ease the participant associated to the modules.

Participant's Education and Experience

Participants reported on their educational background and experience implementing the FRIENDS program. The main theme for this section was participant education and experience and the sub-themes that emerged through a line by line analysis of the interview transcripts included: teaching experience and current position; educational background and training; and the number of times teachers had implemented the program. The sub-themes identified through NVivo are shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 not only identified the sub-themes but also showed how often the sub-themes referred to in the interview transcripts.

Section 1. Participant Education and Experience							
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By	
Demographic Details of Teachers		8	71	11/12/2017 9:	NB	2/3/2018 6:59 P	NB
Educational Background & Trainin		8	32	11/12/2017 9:	NB	2/3/2018 6:52 P	NB
Number of Attempt to Implement		8	16	11/12/2017 9:	NB	2/3/2018 6:52 P	NB
Teaching Experience & Current Po		8	22	11/12/2017 9:	NB	2/3/2018 6:52 P	NB

Figure 1. Participant's educational background and experience.

Educational background and training in the FRIENDS program. Other important personal information about the participants related to their individual educational backgrounds and training. Analysis of the responses indicated that 4 of the participants had a master's degree in education while two of the participants had started their masters studies. The remaining two participants had a bachelor's degree in education.

All of the participants provide their responses regarding the completion of their training in the FRIENDS program. Analysis indicated that the training was completed between 2007 and 2016. One participant completed the training in 2007, three completed in 2009, one completed in 2013 and the remaining three completed their training in 2016. As per the words of P02,

The most recent training was in November 2016 . . . I had done the 4/5 training a few years ago in Winfield. It would not have been more than seven years ago and there may have been another time in between there.

Similarly, according to participant P03,

I took the one that happened in Kelowna. Maybe that was eight years ago. I am thinking that I have done training for all three levels, right, but the 4/5 was in West Kelowna and was one of the first ones.

Within my reflective journal, I wrote:

I wonder if taking training at the different levels of the FRIENDS program has an impact on implementation fidelity or on participants remembering how they implemented the various levels of the program? That is, will they specifically remember what they did in the Grade 4 and 5 program, or will this be confused with how they implemented the Grade 6 and 7 program or the Kindergarten and Grade 1 program? (Bacchus, July 20, 2017).

Number of times implementing the FRIENDS program. The analysis indicated that the FRIENDS program had been implemented by the participants between one and ten times. Four of the participants implemented the program between 5 and 10 times,

while the remaining four participants had implemented the program under five times. As per the words of P04,

I have taught it about six times; I also taught the other level, just depended on the grade which I was teaching, six or may be seven times. So I have implemented the program every year since I have completed the training.

Some reflections I had during my review of this section happened both while conducting a within case analysis as well as a between case analysis.

If individuals in district or school counselor's roles are teaching multiple levels of the program, in different classrooms, they may have difficulty discerning implementation as it related to the Grade 4 and 5 program, versus the other levels of the program? (Bacchus, August 22, 2017).

During this section it appears that individuals continue with the program on a yearly basis, as all of the participants interviewed continued to implement, or planned to implement the program at least yearly when teaching this grade grouping. I wonder if this is about their appreciation of the program and its outcomes. In some schools, it appears about the scope and sequence of the school that is the expectation of administration that the program will be taught to this grade grouping. Further, did I only capture teachers that were interested in continuing with the program? That is, are there others who taught it once and decided not to teach again and if so, how do we capture them to determine what their implementation looked like, and whether or not that had an impact on their decision to continue on with it? (Bacchus, October 20, 2017).

Teaching experience and current position. One question in the semistructured interview inquired about the teaching experience and current position of the participants. Analysis of the responses illustrated that 3 of the 8 participants had 3 to 8 years of experience teaching while the remaining 5 participants identified themselves as having between thirteen and thirty-three years of teaching experience. Similarly, 4 of the 8 participants identified themselves as classroom teachers. One of the eight participants self-identified as a teacher/counselor; 1 as a school counselor, 1 as a district resource teacher and one as a teacher/administrator.

After completing hand coding and NVivo coding of this data, I created a word cloud. A word cloud provides a visual depiction of the most frequently occurring words that emerged through the participant interviews. In the following, word count information around teaching experience was inputted. The word cloud illustrates the most frequently used words that emerged when participants described their teaching experience and current position. The words that are more prominent such as “teaching” and “long” are the ones that were referred to more often by participants. Words, which were used less often by participants, appear much smaller within the visual depiction. This is one way of obtaining a quick visual of the information coded within NVivo.

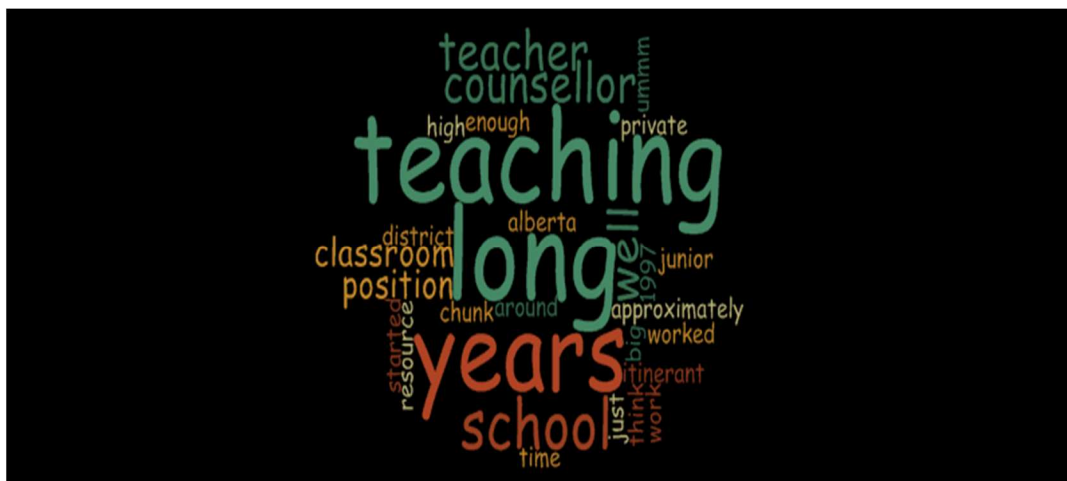


Figure 2. Teaching experience and current position.

Table 3

Subthemes That Arose Under the Theme Perceptions About the FRIENDS Program

Theme	Subtheme
Perceptions about the FRIENDS program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views of modules in FRIENDS program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Length ○ Content ○ Perception of content • Difficulty of modules and implementation practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Easy: Feeling and relaxation ○ Difficult: Changing and challenging thoughts ○ Hardest: Coping step plan ○ Implementation combination and time

Teachers Perceptions About the FRIENDS Program

This subsection of the analysis was identified from the responses in the semistructured interviews where participants provided information on their perceptions of the FRIENDS program. This section represented the overall view of the participants

about the modules and lessons contained within the program. The themes and subthemes that emerged from the data are presented below.

All of the participants were asked about their perceptions, views regarding the FRIENDS program in general, and implementation of the various modules in the classroom setting for Grade 4 and 5 students. Coding of the responses indicated that two main sub themes emerged; these were, the overall views of participants regarding the modules within the program and the level of difficulty of the modules. Participants also provided their views regarding implementation strategies they adopted while teaching the FRIENDS program. An NVivo presentation of themes and subthemes is provided in Figure 3.

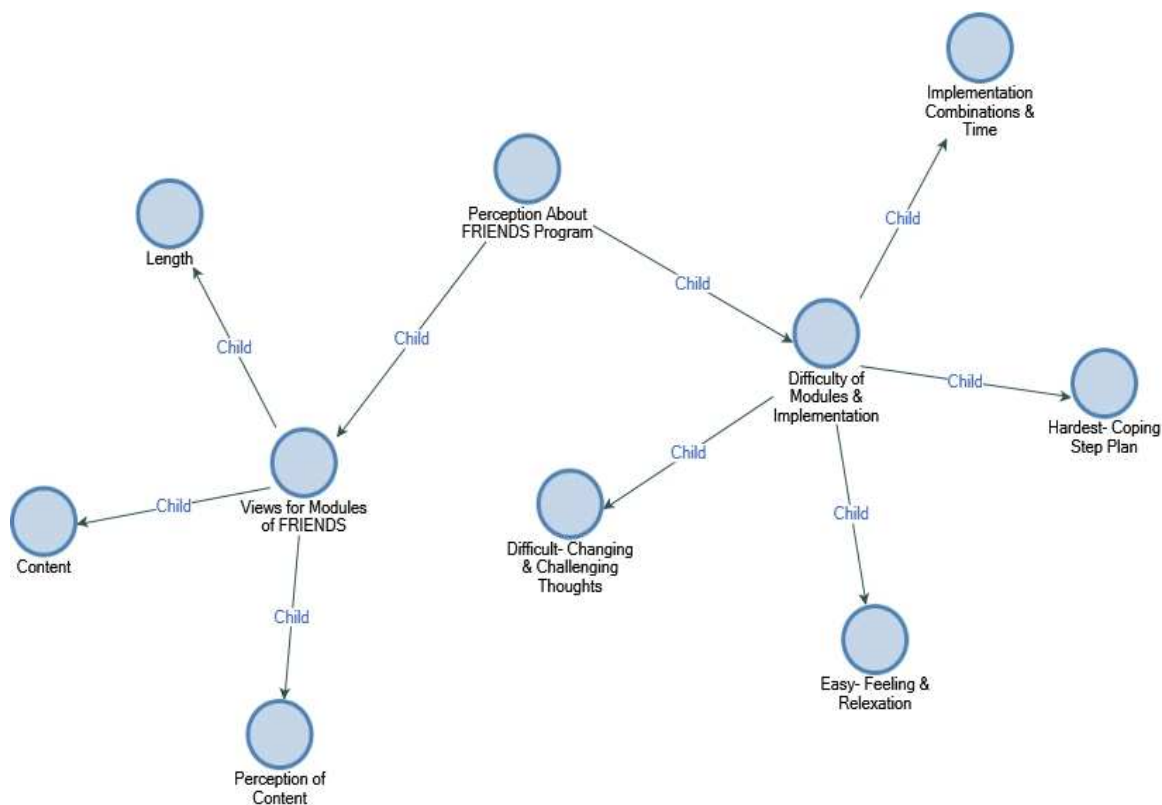


Figure 3. Perceptions of the FRIENDS program.

Teacher's views. Participants in the study were asked about their thoughts regarding the FRIENDS program at the time of their training. The participants provided their views regarding the overall program and the modules contained within the program. Through coding of the responses, the themes and sub-themes emerged. Figure 4 shows responses that emerged when teachers spoke about their perceptions of the FRIENDS program; these included the length of the modules, the content within the modules, and how children perceived the content.

Section 2. Teacher's Views About the Program							
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By	
Perception About FRIENDS Program		8	61	11/12/2017 9:	NB	2/3/2018 6:54 P	NB
Views for Modules of FRIENDS		8	19	11/12/2017 9:	NB	2/3/2018 6:54 P	NB
Perception of Content		1	1	11/12/2017 9:	NB	2/3/2018 6:54 P	NB
Content		4	4	11/12/2017 9:	NB	2/3/2018 6:54 P	NB
Length		5	6	11/12/2017 9:	NB	2/3/2018 6:54 P	NB

Figure 4. Teachers views about the program.

Perception of content. Twenty-five percent of the participants stated that the children viewed the content of the workbooks as immature. This caused them to get distracted and lose focus on the valuable learning entailed in the lesson. As stated by participant 01,

I had a tough time with it. It could have been the class I was teaching because the kids were saying this is cheesy. Some kids were older than the content in maturity level and some were younger. Hence, it was tough getting the kids onboard and having their attention.

As well, participant 04 stated, “Some of the activities felt too young”.

Content. Participants found it difficult to manage covering the content of the FRIENDS program lessons in the recommended time frame while ensuring that students understood the goals and objectives of the modules. According to P08,

Managing the content of the lessons was difficult; they would often take longer to complete than the time frame allotted. By the time I reviewed last week’s content, did the lesson, and had the kids do their work, it was way longer than the

recommended time frame. The amount of language in the book also made the content difficult to get through so I would present the idea and then have kids do things like drawing a picture instead of writing because I felt it was more important to get what they wanted to say rather than getting stuck in the writing, reading and language.

P03 stated, “There is a lot of material. The modules are hard to get through.”

Length of modules. According to the responses of the interviewers, some of the activities within the module were long and time consuming. Participants stated that these two factors created a challenge for them in implementing the program. Participant 05 articulated that the length of the modules was an issue especially when they participant felt they had to implement every activity within the module.

I thought the modules were very long, the first time teaching it I tried to do too much. When I implemented the program for a second time, I just picked a few lessons from each section and this technique worked much better. For the first time it took most of the year to implement the content but when I picked some content, then I finished it in about three months.

Participant 08 commented,

I thought the modules were good, long, but good. I think you can teach the lessons without going through every exercise in the book. There is just so much there, it can be intimidating for the kids, because of the size and the amount of language that is in it.

Similarly, according to P04,

Some of the activities were a little bit long and I felt like there were too many options. It was a bit problem in having lot of options until you are super familiar with it and I still do not feel I am super familiar with it even though I have taken the training and implemented it already.

In my reflective journal I noted,

A reoccurring theme that came up in the responses was the length of the modules and the difficulty to get through. This was present in the teachers that were most experienced with the program as well as teacher implementers that were new to the program (Bacchus, October 22, 2017).

Level of difficulty of the modules and implementation practices. Participants were asked about their perceptions regarding the modules that were easier or more difficult to teach as well as their implementation practices. Analysis of the responses indicated that the participants categorized the modules into three levels based on perceived difficulty: easy, difficult and hardest. Furthermore, the coding of the responses under this sub-theme identified the emerging sub-themes related to the implementation strategies and teaching practices adopted by the participants. Emerging sub-themes are presented in Figure 5.

Easy: Feelings and relaxation. As per the responses of all the participants, the first few modules were the easiest to teach these modules included understanding feelings in ourselves and others, relaxation skills and body cues. Participants were of the view that the children were more comfortable learning these modules and had fun acting out

feelings and having other guess. As per the words of participant 07, “The beginning modules for feeling and relaxation (FR) were more engaging.”

Participant 08 stated,

The feeling and relaxation modules were pretty easy because the kids had fun with the activities related to feelings such as acting and guessing. They also liked how it worked with the mindfulness curriculum we had covered.

One participant commented on the goal setting module (which is part of explore solutions). This participant felt that this section blended well with the curriculum and the kids could use this skill throughout the curriculum and refer back to it, as a result, it was rated as easier to teach. Participant 06 said, “The goal setting one was really good and it meshed so well with so much of the curriculum so this was helpful for the students.”

Difficult: Changing and challenging thoughts. The participants within the study identified that the Changing and Challenging Thoughts section was one of the more difficult modules to teach. This module was associated with the red to green thinking, and specifically changing those red thoughts to green thoughts with thought challengers. Participants found that it was harder for children in Grade 4 and 5 to understand the complexities of this module and fully grasp the idea of being in control of their thoughts, being able to change their thoughts, and specifically, how they change their thoughts. Further, when sections were more difficult to teach or for children to understand. Teachers found it took a lot longer to get through and could become quite time consuming. As per the words of P02, “The changing and challenging thoughts section

could be more difficult, you know, kids had a hard time with changing red thoughts to green thoughts.”

Not only did children have a difficult time changing their red thoughts to green thoughts and using the thought challengers, one participant discussed how children in her class had difficulty understanding the difference between a thought and a feeling. According to participant P05, “The module of inner thoughts was a more difficult for the kids to grasp; just figuring out what a thought is versus what a feeling is; this took a lot of time for the kids to understand.” Participant 07 said, “The challenging thoughts module was difficult; we spent several lessons just on this concept.”

Hardest: Coping step plan. Participants stated that the most difficult module of the FRIENDS program was the coping step plan. This module was viewed both as being complex to teach and for students to understand. Teachers explained that this module contained a large volume of content and because of the complex nature of the lesson; it took longer for kids to understand the concepts and be able to develop their own coping step plans. Participant 03 stated,

The step plan has several lessons needed to complete it and intense teaching is required to make sure the students understand the content of this module because it is super heavy and several lessons are required to get through this one module.

Participant 04 shared the following,

The coping step plan module is longer. I also did a warm up activity and a cool down activity, so by the time I did both of those it was way longer than 45 minutes. This module required a lot of extra time.

P05 stated, “The hardest module was the coping step plan; we spent a few weeks on this concept alone.”

Implementation Time Frame and Timing

All of the participants provided information on their views and practices regarding the implementation of the FRIENDS modules in their Grade 4 and grade 5 classrooms. All participants spoke about the difficulty in getting through the modules in the allotted time; especially the more difficult modules to teach. Participants stated that they completed weekly sessions while implementing the program and followed the book; however they found that they were not necessarily able to complete all of the exercises within the book. According to participant 03 “at first I tried to teach it all. It took a few years to learn that they got the concepts without covering every lesson”. Participant 06 stated “the program can take longer than they stipulate and that piece can be daunting for teaches”. In addition, participant 05 indicated, “The time teaching it, I tried to do it all and it was just too much, the second time through I would just pick a few lessons from each section, and that worked much better.”

When coding this section, I wrote the following quote in my reflective journal,

The majority of participants tried to cover all of the content or most of it during their implementation efforts. For whatever reason, these participants have left the teacher training not fully understanding what coverage of the content means, and how many exercises they need to complete with their class in each module. Some have realized it after their first time implementing the program, and others after

years. For new teacher implementers this could impact their ability to continue to deliver the program in the future (Bacchus, October 22, 2017).

According to participant 04,

Although I was following the book, but I did not do all of the exercises. If there were five activities, I might only do a few but I tried to do the weekly sessions and ran the program throughout the year.

It was also observed that the selection of the date and time for the implementation of the program was a factor in implementation. As per the words of participant P06,

The time frame I chose was difficult, on Mondays other things would happen and then our FRIENDS time would be taken up. I also chose the time period just before recess, kids would start watching the clock at 10:20. This limited deeper conversations as they were too distracted to participate and benefit.

P07 also stated, “The timing of implementation can be challenging when coteaching with the school counselor because you are trying to coordinate two schedules. Analysis of the responses also revealed that teachers adopted language from other programs in order to assist students in understanding some of the sections of the program that were more difficult to teach. According to P08,

I kind of combined a little of red and green thoughts with the zones of regulation because they both talk about the colors and how they correspond to thoughts so it was easy to combine both programs together and I also used the mindfulness program as well.

P08 stated,

I combined the red to green thoughts with zones of regulations and it was helpful because kids know zones language and have been a part of culture of elementary schools for years and it made the understanding of red and green thoughts easier.

As illustrated in the quotes from participants other programs being implemented in schools were used to complement student learning of the FRIENDS materials. The WITS program was viewed as a great school wide program that could be implemented at the same time the FRIENDS program was being implemented; the two programs would complement one another. Participants also discussed incorporating the mind up curriculum in the relaxation portion of FRIENDS and Zones of Regulation to augment learning within the feelings modules of FRIENDS. As well as incorporating other programs into the content of FRIENDS. My reflections during this portion of the coding are included in the quote below.

Teachers discussed the time to get through the content of FRIENDS as being daunting and overwhelming and then shared how they augmented the program with other programs, which would again increase the length of lessons. This process, although they felt it was necessary, appeared to become frustrating and increased the amount of time they needed to allocate to the program and their own anxiety about trying to cover the content. (Bacchus, October 25, 2017).

The majority of the participants were also of the view that the FRIENDS program lessons focused too much on workbook completion and was too lengthy to implement in the recommended timeframe. Teachers noted the workbook was a challenge for children

who were below grade level in their reading or writing skills. Teachers discussed the importance of adapting the reading and writing to ensure that kids did not get bogged down in this area. As a result, teachers spent much more time on the content areas and this was also a challenge.

P05 stated,

The program felt too workbooky and it is hard to get away from that. It takes a lot more planning to try and come up with ways to make it more interactive and not focused so much on the workbook.

Participant 04 stated, “We had some nonreaders which was challenging. The book is daunting, especially to those kids that do not want to write.” Similarly, participant 02 stated “some of the challenges were output issues with kids, so getting less attached to having them fill out every page.”

In the following NVivo graph, the responses from the computer generated coding of the results for this section are depicted. The graph demonstrates the responses that emerged from the data under each sub-theme and formed the basis of the computer analysis. The computer analysis was consistent with the handed coded results, which also identified these areas as being relevant for the teachers interviewed for this study.

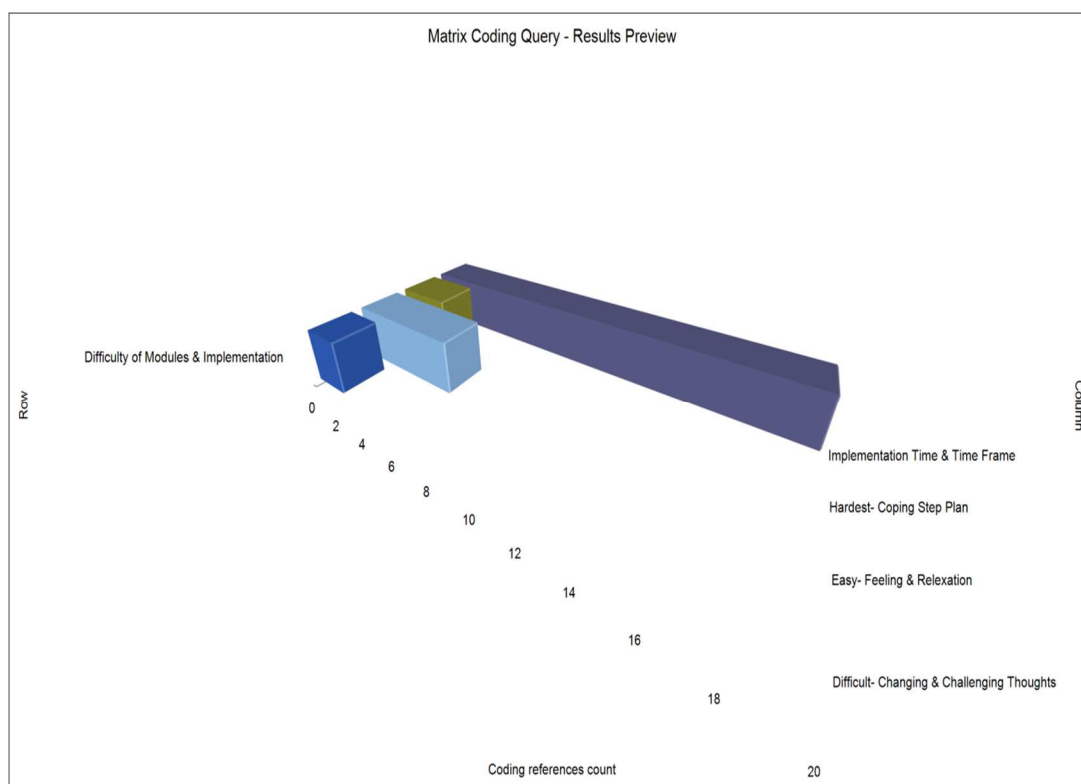


Figure 5: Difficulty with modules and implementation.

In order to answer RQ2—How does the individual teacher’s practice of implementing the FRIENDS program differ from what is found in the program guidelines?—this research question I first report on teacher perceptions regarding adjustments they made to actual implementation practices within the FRIENDS program. I will then follow up and report the factors teachers identified that have impacted their implementation of the FRIENDS program or they found challenging while implementing the FRIENDS program. I will then report the teacher’s perceptions of the impact that support played in their implementation efforts.

Adjustments Made in Actual Implementation Practices

This section of the analysis examined the comparison of actual practices of the FRIENDS program with the guidelines provided within the program. It is to be noted that participants were asked about their personal experiences in implementing the FRIENDS program and whether they adjusted the program or delivered it according to the protocol, they learned in their 1- day teacher training. I have presented the themes and subthemes that emerged below. As well, I have included a NVivo diagram which illustrates the parent node that emerged from the data as well as the child nodes. This is consistent with the information that was garnered during hand coding.

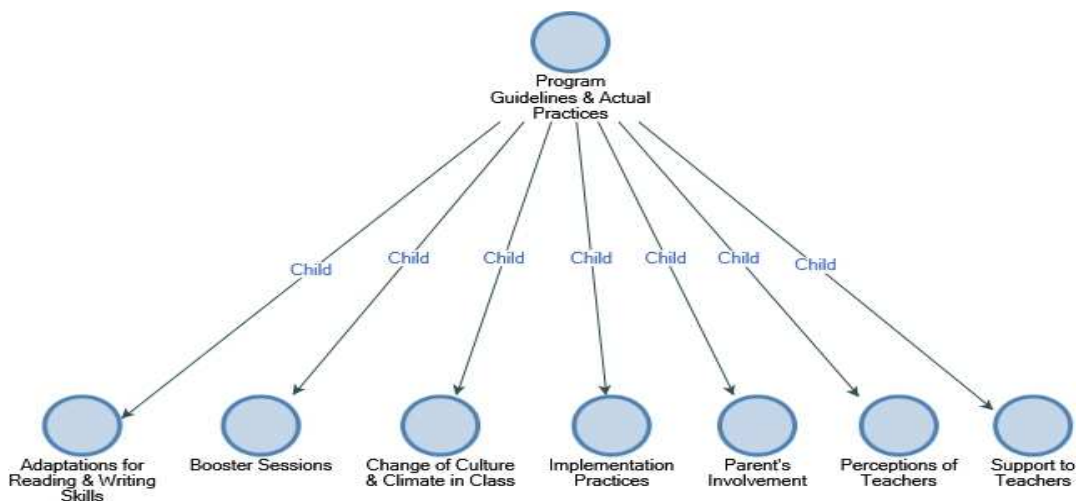


Figure 6: Program guidelines and actual practices.

Table 4

Subthemes That Arose Under the Theme Program Guidelines and Actual Practices

Theme	Subtheme
Program guidelines and actual practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation for reading and writing skills • Support to teachers • Perceptions of teachers • Change of culture and climate in class • Implementation practices • Booster sessions • Parent's involvement

One of the adaptations that teachers discussed was the need to adapt the content of the books and the delivery of that content for students in their classes who were low readers or writers. According to participant P03,

I was in a class where there were a lot of non-writers and low readers. This was a challenge; they were so nervous to write in the book. The book is so big and they were concerned about spelling. It created a lot of anxiety. So I would scan the pages, put it up on the white board and go through it word by word. We would read it together, and make a list of words. It took a long time to get through the lessons.

Participant 05 echoed similar thoughts,

It is not just adapting the program but rather finding alternative ways to deliver the content. I might read them the exercise using smart board and instead of writing out their answers, they can draw. This helps them in focusing more on the activities rather than the spelling of the words. So I can say that I adapted the delivery of the content rather than the adaptation of the content itself.

Support to Teachers

Some of the participants also stressed the importance of support provided by the school counselor or administrator to teachers during the process of implementation of FRIENDS program. Analysis revealed that the support received from the school counselor was not necessarily a part of the program implementation guidelines but was deemed very helpful by participants. Participants who were supported by their school counselors discussed how beneficial this support was in their implementation practices. According to participant P03,

The school counselor could come in and help the teacher and it was really helpful.

We would discuss the lesson plans and resources. This provided the support until the teacher was ready to take over and implement the program on their own.

Similarly, participant 06 stated, “our counselor helps with reluctance on the part of teachers, most of the teachers will come on board but will need coaching and mentoring. The counselor is a big part of that.”

Perception of Teachers

Another important factor in implementation was the perception of teachers. Participants found that when they implemented the FRIENDS program, in classrooms, for classroom teachers, the classroom teacher’s perception of the program affected implementation. As per participant 01 “some of the classroom teacher leave their classrooms during the FRIENDS program sessions and they did not want any part of it.” Similarly, participant 02 stated, “when I facilitated for teachers, teacher involvement was very teacher specific. I remember some being involved and others not so much.”

Some teachers also had the perception that teaching this program was not part of their job, and would subsequently leave the room during implementation by a district staff person or school counselor. According to participant 03,

Some of the teachers saw the program more as a counselor's job and they showed little interest in it at beginning. It is definitely better for the classroom teacher to implement this program rather than counselor, because the classroom teachers have more knowledge about their students as well as have more flexibility in their schedule.

P03 also stated,

When teachers wanted the program, they stayed and used the language over the course of the week. So with the others that were talked into it because they had these kids, you had less buy in and they were more inclined to leave do other things during program lessons.

Changing the Culture and Climate in Classrooms

Participants were of the view that the classroom teachers were in a better position to implement the program than school counselors or district staff because they had the ability to infuse the language of FRIENDS throughout the day and make it an integral part of the curriculum. By infusing the language of FRIENDS throughout the day, teachers changed the culture and climate of their classrooms and showed children how the FRIENDS skills could assist with everyday issues and concerns. According to participant 02 "when teachers were not involved, kids would say we only talk about this when you are here. It did not change the culture or the climate of the classroom; it just

became more associated with me as the teacher”. Participant 03 also “if teachers teach the program they have better knowledge of it. Then they are able to change the culture and the climate of classrooms.”

Implementation Practices

The analysis indicated that the participants followed the sequence of the program although they would sometimes incorporate common language or skills from other program. Further participants stated they made adjustments to the protocol as necessary to meet the needs of their classes. According to participant 08 “I made some adjustments which included the incorporation of common language and skills from other programs. Other than that, I followed the sequence and it took 10 weeks to complete”. Participant 01 stated, “We implemented it in a way that flowed in what was happening in the classroom. But because I was so new at it, I also kind of stuck to the sequence that was there.” Participant 05 stated “I ran the sessions in order and rang through them sequentially, and participant 07 stated “I taught the program in sequence and in 10 weeks.” Participant 02 stated,

I used the problem solving model from skills streaming and language from FRIENDS into the “stop opt go” so that the learners could still use the same language that was being used throughout the school. It was showing that how the programs fit together and could be complementary of each other.

According to participant 04,

I would skip activities if I knew they would not work for kids, but I still went in order of the book. We did not skip ahead but would go backwards and revisit curriculum we had already covered, when an issue arose.

Within my personal journal I reflected,

All of participants reported following the sequence provided in the manual. They stated they sometimes would integrate other programs to teach the concepts or reinforce them, but if they knew the programs well, this did not appear to be an issue (Bacchus, October 26, 2017).

Booster Sessions

The program guidelines specified that booster sessions should be incorporated after the completion of the program; this assists in reinforcement and acquisition of the skills the students have learned during the program. The analysis indicated that only one of the eight participants, or 12.5%, had incorporated booster sessions after the completion of the FRIENDS program lessons. She equated this to having more time, having run the program over 20 sessions and further stated that this was the first time she has had the time to do booster sessions. According to participant P02,

I did the booster session this year. Sometimes, that looked at the exercises we did not do during the year and would go back to them. Booster sessions were incorporated in this last session and not in prior ones because I was in and out of the classroom.

In my personal journal I reflected,

Not running booster sessions was consistent across participants with the exception of one, who had run the program many times in the past without the use of booster sessions, but was only able to include them this last time because she ran the program over 20 sessions. Booster sessions were not something that participants stated they did not want to do, but rather, were reflected as something they did not have the time do (Bacchus, October 25, 2017).

Parent Involvement

One of the questions incorporated in the semistructured interview was regarding the involvement of parents and their participation in FRIENDS program. In the analysis, I observed that the extent of engaging parents in the program was through a newsletter sent home at the beginning of the program, children's homework activities or an e-mail.

According to participant P06, "it was mostly just the students going home and talking about it at home."

Also participant P03 narrated,

We did have a parent information night at the school at the beginning, where the family of schools was invited. It was to share the strategies with the parents, but the turnout was not very high. We only did the parent session when the Force came and ran it; this was the only one we did.

According to participant P07,

It is hard to get parents buy in. Parent's involvement was through homework but this group did not do homework. This year I am creating a culture around

homework. This will set them up for more meaningful engagement when doing the program.

Parental involvement appeared limited to home assignments and teachers encouraging their students to have conversations with family members about the program. As per participant P05, “I sent home a letter at the beginning advising them and occasionally would have kid take homework home”. Participant 03 stated, “This has been one of my weaknesses. Mainly it would be through the students, with take home assignments or have the conversation with your family during dinner.”

In my personal journal I reflected,

The area of parent involvement has been a real shortfall in program implementation. None of the teachers discussed making an effort to include parents in their child’s learning about anxiety. The one parent presentation was done by an external agency and years ago. This could be a reflection of how busy teachers are and that this is one more thing to do however without including parents, the ability to shift anxious thoughts and feelings in children will be limited (Bacchus, October 26, 2017).

Figure 7 illustrates the results received through NVivo which were consistent with the results garnered through the process of hand coding.

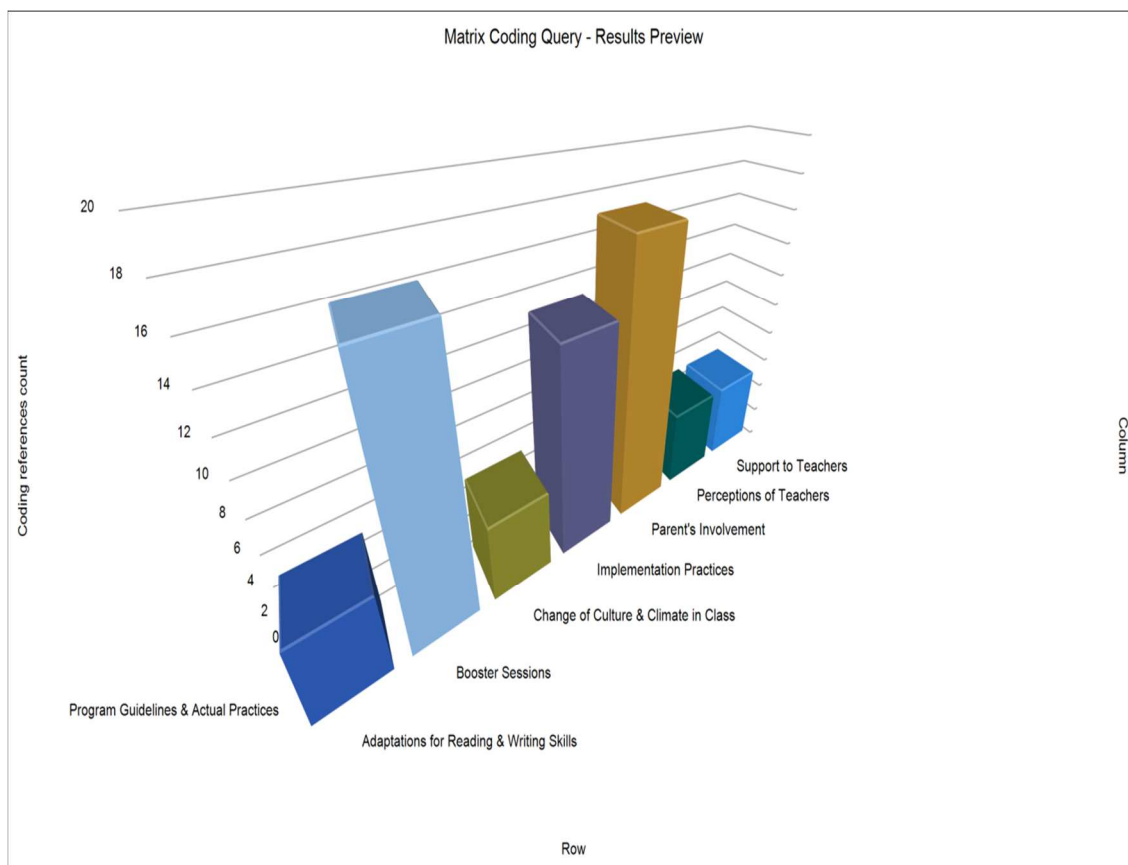


Figure 7: Program guidelines and actual practices.

In order to answer RQ3—Why do teachers make the decisions they do regarding implementation; are there factors that have impacted implementation and fidelity of implementation?—the data indicated the decisions were complex. Further, the data indicated that the decisions were better understood by first comprehending teachers’ reasons for being trained in the FRIENDS program, their thoughts about the program at the time of training and their thoughts about implementing the program after their training. These factors all tied into a teacher’s decision to implement the program. Further, in the following sections, data is presented on the factors teachers identified that

pose a challenge for implementation as well as those factors that positively impacted implementation.

Teacher's Decision Regarding Implementation of FRIENDS Program

This section of the analysis is focused on understanding the views of teachers regarding the reasons they chose to be trained in the FRIENDS program and implement it in their classrooms. The themes and subthemes that emerged from the data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Themes and Subthemes for Teacher's Decisions Regarding Implementation

Theme	Subtheme
Reasons to be trained for FRIENDS program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help children in anxiety issues • Personal interest and skill acquisition • Recommendation • Support and mentoring by professionals
Thoughts about program at the time of training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excited • Support of colleagues • Perceived ease of implementation • Ready to implement
Implementation of program after training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily and readily implemented • Language of content: A challenge • Support in implementation

Reasons Participants Chose to be Trained for FRIENDS Program

Participant responses indicated the reasons they chose to be trained in the FRIENDS program related to their personal interest in the program, their feeling of responsibility to help children learn skills to manage their anxiety, recommendations by

school administration and the support they knew they would receive in implementing the program including being mentored by the school counselor.

Help children with anxiety issues. Analysis of the responses indicated that participants were interested in helping the children learn skills to manage their anxiety.

Below are examples of responses from participants, for example, participant 05 stated,

I was noticing the number of children that were anxious in school and I heard that this program is a great way of working with kids on their anxiety. I think all the kids really benefitted from having the skills taught in this program; whether they are anxious or not, it helped them in identifying their feelings, relaxing their bodies, and turning their negative thinking into positive thinking.

Also, according to participant 06,

I chose to be trained in FRIENDS program because it's a tool to help our kids and any tool that can help kids with their planning and their goal setting and anxiety issues is something which you want to at least find out about and then incorporate that into your classroom.

Similarly, participant 08 stated,

Well I have a real interest in anxiety and saw this as a great way to teach kids skills to manage their anxiety. There are way too many kids that need 1:1 service and we do not have the capacity to deal with all of that. So a full class program is really ideal. Then most can learn skills and it becomes really clear who needs more 1:1 service. I also like the way the program builds skills in kids and other teachers.

Within my personal journal, I reflected that sixty-two and one half percent of participants highlighted wanting to help kids manage their anxiety as a reason for taking this program (Bacchus, October 22, 2017).

Personal Interest and Skill Acquisition. Participants also indicated that another reason they chose to be trained in the FRIENDS program was due to their own personal interest in the program. As per the words of participant P03,

The skills offered by the package were the ones that I was interested in learning more about. These were useful when I was doing counseling in small groups. It was my interest to see how a program that was CBT small scale can be done on the whole class.

Participant 04 stated, "I still consider myself a pretty new teacher so anytime something comes up and I like this grade level so I just want to be more familiar with the material and teach a bit more authentically. It was also observed that most of the teachers personally showed interest in learning the skills taught in the FRIENDS program.

I have a real interest in anxiety and saw this program as a great way to teach kids those skills which can be helpful in managing their anxiety. There are way too many kids who need one on one service and we do not have capacity to deal with every one of them, so a full class program is really.

Within my personal journal I reflected,

One hundred percent of the participants indicated that at least one of the reasons they got involved in the program was because of their interest in helping students

to manage anxiety, or because of their own personal interest and skill acquisition (Bacchus, October 25, 2017).

Recommendations. Participants stated that another reason they chose to be trained in the program was because of a recommendation by the school or because it was a program that was used in the school. According to participant 04,

I had a full class with a couple of IEP's and several unofficial IEP's. So the recommendation was you have all these kids with all these needs and the skills in the program might help. And it's a program they have been using in the school.

P07 also stated,

The program was desired by the school; it was highly recommended. First time I ran it without training and I felt that I was floundering. I knew that the program was desired by the school and I had a history with it, so I chose to take the training for this program.

Support and mentoring by professionals. Two of the participants also provided the views that the support and mentoring given by the school counselor was helpful and it was also one of the reasons she chose to take the FRIENDS teacher training program.

According to participant 07,

I chose to take the program so I could get support. The school counselor came in and did first three sessions. I shadowed and she came and supported for the sessions. When I started running the program, she was available to me at any time if I had questions or did not understand something. It was hands on mentoring.

P04 also stated,

Having the support of the school counsellor was an important part of my decision to implement the program; she started the program in my room and I took over once I had the training. I knew she was there any time I needed help with the content or delivery of a lesson.

In my personal journal, I reflected, “of the four participants who identified as classroom teachers, 50% identified having the support of the school counselor as being an important part of their decision to implement the program” (Bacchus, October 26, 2017).

Teachers Thoughts About Program at Time of Training

Participants of the qualitative study were asked about their thoughts regarding the FRIENDS program at the time of their training. Coding indicated their thoughts included being excited, having support of colleagues, how easy the program seemed to implement and feeling ready or prepared to implement the program.

Excited. Participants expressed excitement about the program and figuring out how they were going to take what they learned in their training and make it work in their classrooms. Another spoke of excited to start the program within the cohort of teachers who took the training together. According to participant 01 “I was really excited about it, it was just a matter of sitting down and figuring out what it was going to look like”. Further, participant 03 stated, “I was excited to get going on it.”

Support of Colleagues. Participants shared that taking the training with colleagues was great because it offered the opportunity for collegial support. That is, the

participants were able to share ideas, brainstorm and support each other with the implementation of the program. As per the words of participant P03,

We could bounce ideas off each other and share resources. We would also be able to give advice on content; this lesson was great or I did not like this one. I could see that having the support of my colleagues was going to be really helpful.

Perceived ease of implementation. Another important opinion provided by the participants reflected how easy they felt the program would be to implement. Participant commented that they liked the layout and felt very comfortable with the training materials as they were going through the manual with their trainers. As per the words of participant P08, “I thought it was good, easy, and well laid out. I was really comfortable with the material and did not have any worries about teaching it”. Participant 06 also stated, “the program is simple because you just have to follow the guidelines, the book, and you can do it. It was straightforward and I had no reservations about teaching the program to my class.

Within my personal journal I reflected,

I was surprised that participants did not indicate any nervousness or apprehension about teaching this topic related to mental health; I personally assumed that a factor that would have arisen was participants feeling a little uneasy about the content and some angst about delivering it (Bacchus, October 26, 2017).

Ready to implement. One of the participants was of the view that because the program was in the process of being implemented with the help of the school counselor that she felt prepared to come in and take it over after her training.

I had implemented the program once training was completed as the school counselor came in and got it going. I just felt like I had to pick up where the school counselor left off and I was hoping that I could use some other resources such as videos because the book is not that appealing. The training made me feel prepared and ready to implement the program.

Figure 8 illustrates a visual depiction of the data from the NVivo results. The results through NVivo were consistent with the hand coding that was conducted prior to the use of computer assisted software.

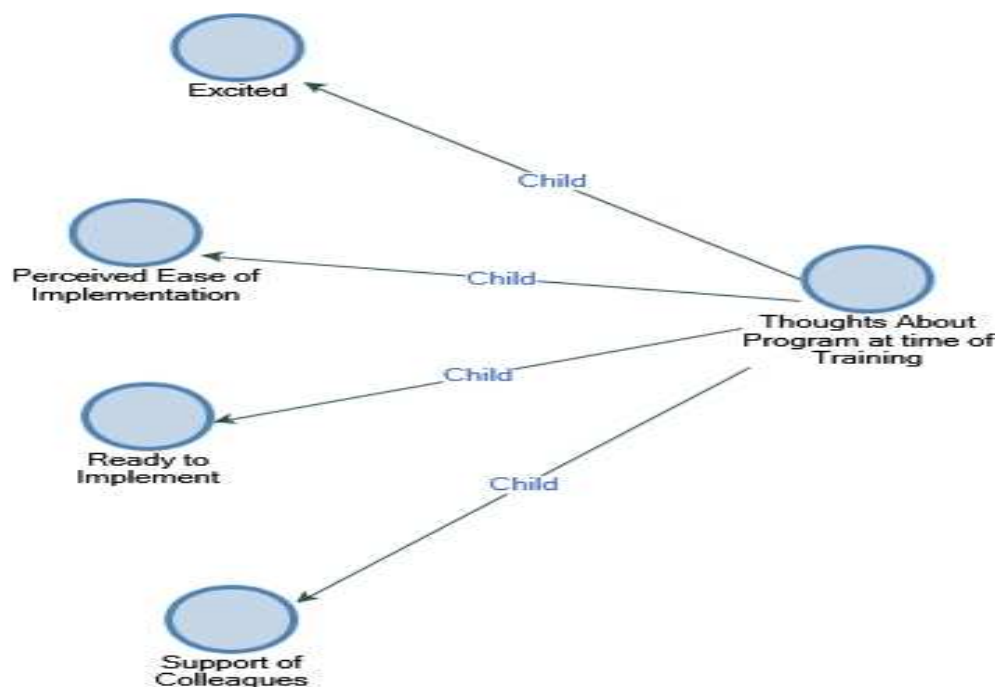


Figure 8: Teacher's thoughts about the program at time of training.

During the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked about their intentions to implement the FRIENDS program after the completion of their one-day teacher training. Coding of the responses are noted below.

Implementation of Program After Training

Participant responses revealed that after training participants felt ready and eager to implement the program in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms. The responses of the participants are categorized under the emerging sub themes, which are presented below.

Easily and readily implemented. Analysis of the responses indicated that after training participants felt ready to implement the program in their classrooms. According to participant 06, “I implemented the program as soon as the books were there”. Participant 08 stated, “I think the FRIENDS program has more substance and strategies and I was ready to implement it”. Further, participant 01 added, “My first program was implemented within a few month of taking training. It was the first opportunity I had because of the Christmas break and it was a natural starting point.” It was also observed that the participants were excited to implement the FRIENDS program as they were seeking the opportunities to practically reinforce their training skills within their classrooms. As per participant P08, “I like the idea of a universal program to deal with anxiety, which is a universal problem. I think the FRIENDS program has more substance and strategies and I was ready to implement it. One participant stated she was so confident about the FRIENDS skills and training that she decided to run the program all year. According to participant 07, “I decided to run the program all year because it would be better than parachuting in for twelve weeks and moving onto the next program.”

Challenge of having the program content in English. Twenty-five percent of the participants were of the view that the language could be a challenge in the implementation process of the FRIENDS program. The content of the program book is in

English and this could be problematic in a French immersion school, where the majority of class time should be spent on French language content. Having the program only offered in English was also an issue for French teachers who have French as their primary language. As stated by participants P04,

One of the challenges for us in French immersion is that so that many of the materials come to us in English but we are supposed to have majority of our content in our language of French. So the switch over to English will take away the goal of French immersion and this language issue will also be challenging for teachers who have the French background; unfortunately, a lot of good resources and programs come to us in English.

In addition, participant 06 stated, “for people who are not comfortable teaching an English component, that’s where it is a bit interesting for them; it is easier for someone who teaches in English.”

From my reflective journal, I noted:

It is very surprising to me that the language content would come up as an issue. Twenty-five percent of the participants noted it as a challenge within the program while 2 others indicated that they could see how having the content in English could be challenging for some teachers but wasn’t for them because of their comfortableness and ease in teaching in English. This was definitely a surprise. It has only been a few years since the program has not been available in French, yet teachers in this district did not appear to know this was an option. Has the lack of

availability of the program in French impacted implementation or implementation fidelity (Bacchus, October 25, 2017)?

Support in implementation. Half of the participants were of the view that they had support from their school administration and counselor to implement the FRIENDS Program. Participants were aware of their ability to access support from the school counselor to start running the program as long as they took the training and took over program implementation post training. As per the words of participant 01,

The program was started at the end of September with the School Counselor teaching it. Once I took the training at the end of October then I took over; I knew the School Counselor was there to support if I needed her.

According to participant 04 “the school counselor supported with the implementation because she was already running it and she provided me support in taking over from her once I was done with my training”. One of the participants highlighted the fact that she received support from colleagues while she was implementing the program for the first time. She found that having a cohort of teachers at the training was helpful and encouraging and supported her implementation efforts. As per the words of participant P03,

It was helpful to have small cohorts of teachers; we kind of implemented the program together. We just ran the program at around same time so we could touch base on the content and run ideas or questions by one another to support one another.

I have included a word cloud of the data inputted into NVivo for analysis. The word cloud depicts the 100 most often used words by participants when they spoke about implementation of the program after their teacher training.

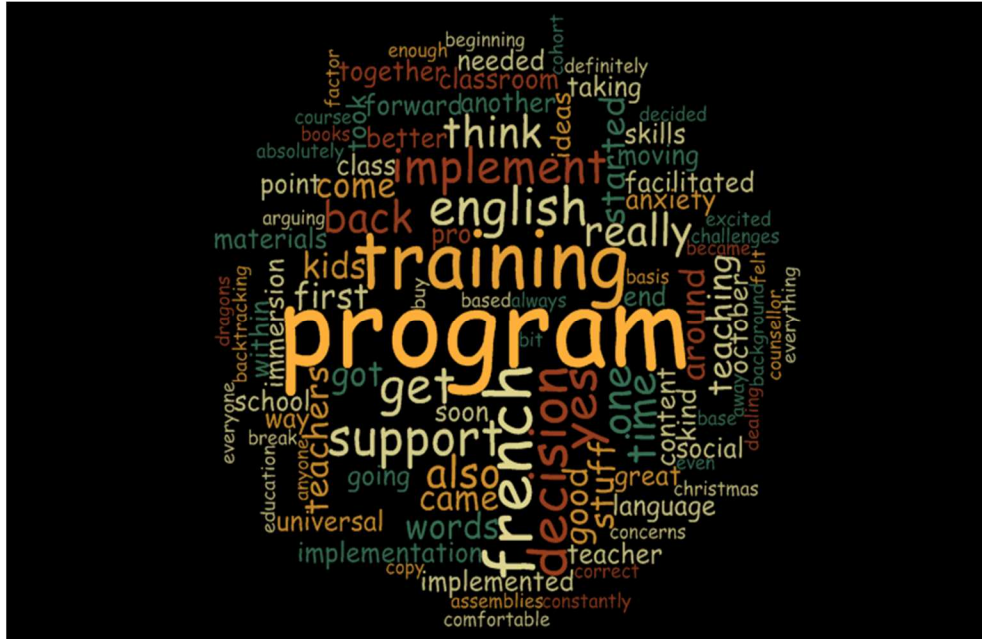


Figure 9. Program implementation after training.

Factors Impacting the Implementation of the FRIENDS Program

In this section of the analysis, I presented the challenges faced by teachers of Grade 4 and 5 students while implementing the FRIENDS program, and how these challenges have impacted fidelity of program implementation. This section also contains information about the support provided by the school staff and the administration to teachers during the implementation process and the impact of this support on the implementation of the FRIENDS program. The themes and subthemes that emerged from the data are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Factors Impacting Implementation of the FRIENDS Program

Theme	Subtheme
Challenges in the implementation of FRIENDS program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language issues • Teacher's attitude • Classroom practices • Curriculum and time management • Book content and overall look
Support from school staff and administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor support • Admin support
Impact of support on the implementation of FRIENDS program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' perceptions • Eliminating resistance • Improvement in classroom practices • Clarity in goals and objectives • FRIENDS language

Challenges in implementation of FRIENDS program. When participants discussed the challenges that arose during the implementation of the FRIENDS program, the sub-themes that emerged included language issues, teacher's behavior, classroom practices, curriculum, time management, content of the book and overall look.

Language issues. Some of the participants highlighted an important issue they faced during the implementation of FRIENDS program in English in a French Immersion school. Some teachers were not comfortable teaching the content in English for a variety of reasons, including the amount of time the program took and therefore, the amount of instruction that was not being given in French. Others teachers spoke of difficulty in knowing the English words to describe complex issues, when French was their first language. As well, it was noted that English is the "fun time" for students and having the content in English could take away its seriousness. According to narrations of P06, "for

those teachers who are not comfortable teaching an English component, that is where it was a little bit difficult for them; it is easier for someone who can teach English.”

Participant 07 stated,

English is a challenge because it is difficult to justify the time spent in English. English is normally their fun time in which they can relax. They get to do poetry and read books at their level. In French, they end up reading a lot younger books, which are not developmentally appropriate. By having the FRIENDS lessons in English, the importance of the program is lost.

Teacher’s attitude. Another challenge mentioned by participants who implemented the program, within classrooms by a district staff or counselors was the impact of the classroom teacher’s attitude about the program, on implementation.

Participant 01 stated, “they did not want to talk about their feelings; they also had a hard time taking risks. Partially I was up against lack of interest by the teacher.” According to participant 06,

I do not know that all teachers see the value of this program but some obviously were more inclined and interested in the implementation. Certain teachers have a resistance to it. I think they are just seeing it as another thing to do and not seeing how it can be helpful and how it can be part of your day and not necessarily on top of your day.

Classroom practices. A factor highlighted by participants was the adoption of classroom practices when district staff or school counselors are implementing the program. Itinerant teachers spoke about both negative and positive experiences they had

while engaged with team teachers within a classroom. As per the words of participant P01,

Team teaching can also be a challenge because one of the teachers was not at all interested and she would leave the classroom and did not want any part of it. The one teacher was not there; she would leave the classroom and did not want any part of it. It was more, this is your program, and here you go. This is my prep time. This was another challenge. The other teachers were excited and involved. This one was not.

Similarly, participant 02 stated,

Team teaching can be a really positive or really negative; I have had both experiences over the years. This year has been great as both teachers were really invested. But in the past I have had teachers leave during the FRIENDS lessons. The program became more associated with me, as the teacher.

In my personal journal I reflected,

A challenge that became apparent in reading the transcripts faced by helping teachers (counselors or itinerants) who go into the classroom and present the FRIENDS curriculum for the classroom teacher. If the team teaching model is followed teachers reported that this system can work, however, if teachers do not appear that interested in the program and are not willing to co-teach, then there follow through during the week becomes limited or non-existent. I found it interesting that 67% of the itinerant teachers found this to be problematic; the one that did not was in a school where there was an expectation that the classroom

teacher takes the training, and takes over the implementation of the program (Bacchus, October 27, 2017).

Curriculum and time management. Participants stated that the length of the program and modules were difficult especially when the program was viewed as not a part of the curriculum, but rather something teachers do on top of the curriculum. According to participants P01, “the length of the program could be a hindrance and challenge. Some see it as something that is an add-on, something that is not part of the curriculum. Participant 03 also stated, “The modules are long and at times hard to get through. Also the additional resources are important to bring the program more to life for kids.”

Teachers provided positive feedback that the FRIENDS Program fits well within the new British Columbia Ministry of Education Curriculum. As narrated by participant P06,

I think with the new curriculum it works even better so the people that are more resistant to it would probably be more open when they will see how it fits into the new curriculum and it's not just one more thing that they have to do.

Book content and overall look. Sixty-two and one half percent of the participants identified the lengthy and outdated student manual as a challenge for implementation. According to participant 07, “the books are old looking and need more technology to be brought into the program to get the kids engaged.” Similarly, participant 05 stated,

I think the amount of reading and writing is a challenge. The program feels very workbooky and it is a bit hard to get away from that. It takes a lot of planning to come up with the ways of making it interactive and not only focus on the workbook.

Similarly, participant stated,

The book has 150 pages and its little daunting to think that you are going to get through these 150 pages. There are also those kids who do not want to write and we also had some non-readers. So I can say that the size of the book or the actual book itself was a challenge for some kids.

Participant 08 articulated,

A challenge in the book was the amount of information in book and the overall look of the book with all that writing. I had a lot of kids that were below grade level and it was way too much for them.

The challenges participants identified are highlighted in Figure 10. This is a NVivo visual depiction of the information that came forward during the interviews and was hand coded and then coded through the use of the software. The results generated through hand coding and computer coding were consistent.

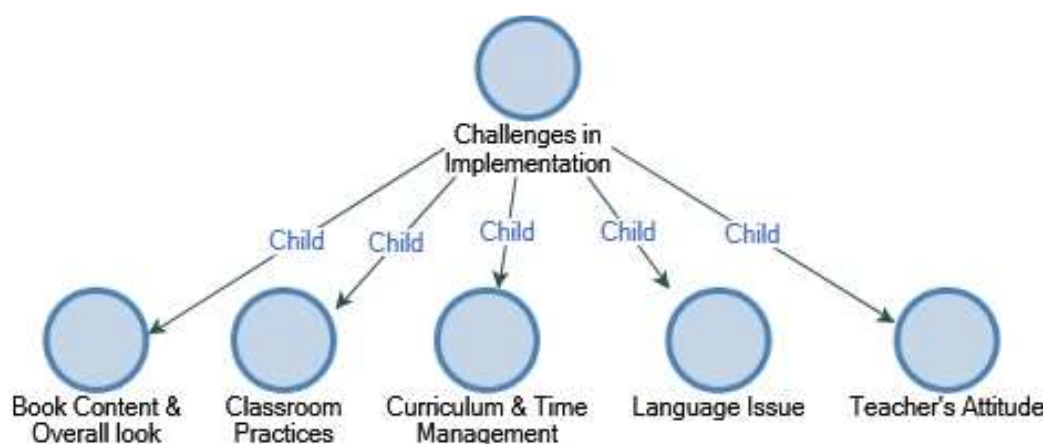


Figure 10: Challenges in implementation.

Support From School Staff and Administration

One hundred percent of the participants commented on support received from the school counselor or administrator and the impact of that support on their implementation efforts. Figure 11 is a visual representation of the theme and sub-themes that emerged through both hand coding and NVivo.

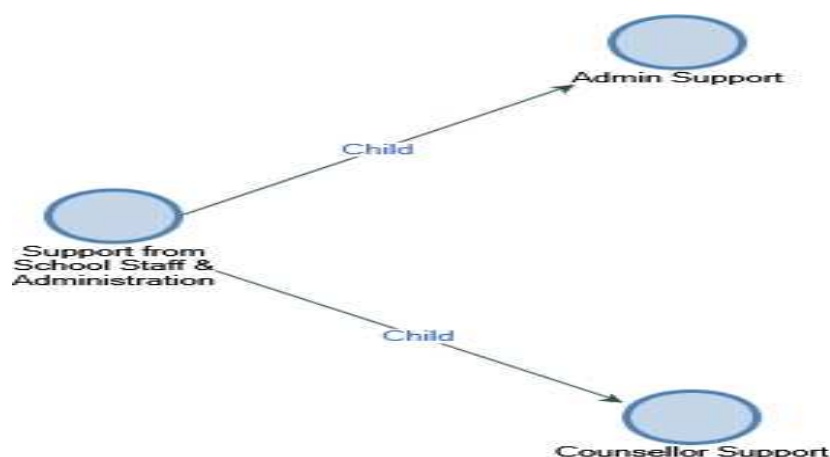


Figure 11: Support from school staff and administration.

Counselor support. Of the eight participants in the study, five were in roles where receiving support from the school counselor in implementing the program was a possibility. Of the five participants, 60% received direct support from the school counselor in implementing the program and found that support to be helpful, encouraging, and provided opportunities to learn about implementation practices in real life scenarios. As per the words of participant P07,

I got the support from school counselor and FRIENDS liaison. I found the support and I felt it beneficial. It was encouraging to watch someone who is a master in communicating with kids and it was a great learning for me.

According to participant 03, “our school counselor taught with me until I had the training, and then was there to help out and answer any questions. This was very helpful.” In addition, participant 06 stated “our school counselor was more of our support piece, it was an added bonus.”

Administrative support. One hundred percent of the participants commented on support of their school administrator and the impact that support had on their program implementation efforts. Seventy-five percent of the participants spoke to the positive impact of administrative support while the other 25% spoke to negative impact of not having administrative support. According to participant 08, “administration was supportive of the program. They had been aware of the program and its goals and welcomed it in our school”. Participant 05 stated, “Administration knew I was running the program and were generally supportive.” In addition, participant 03 stated,

The implementation of the FRIENDS program totally depended on the administration in schools. The school where I was teaching had an administrator that was trained in FRIENDS as well, and offered support classroom teachers until the classroom teachers were trained themselves.

Participants also commented on the negative impact on implementation when administration was not supportive of the program or knew little about it. According to participant 01,

In the other school I worked I was told by admin that as a resource teacher this is not your job so now I am cautious and ask. So admin support can be an issue when they are against the program.

Participant 03 also added, “I was in other schools where administration was not supportive of the program and it really made a difference for teachers; it is hard to invest time in a program you know your administration doesn’t support.”

Impact of support on the implementation of the FRIENDS program.

Participants identified the impact of having support by school staff and administration on their implementation practices. Figure 12 illustrates the sub-themes that emerged through the computer generated coding process using NVivo.

Research Question 3						
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Modified On	Modified By	
Impact of Support on Implementation of FRIENDS program	8	21	11/12/2017	2/3/2018 7:22	NB	
Teacher's perceptions	2	2	11/12/2017	2/3/2018 7:23	NB	
Minimizing Resistance	3	4	11/12/2017	2/3/2018 7:23	NB	
Improvement in Classroom Practices	3	4	11/12/2017	2/3/2018 7:23	NB	
Clarity in Goals & Objectives	1	1	11/12/2017	2/3/2018 7:23	NB	
FRIENDS Language	1	1	11/12/2017	2/3/2018 7:23	NB	

Figure 12. Factors impacting implementation of the FRIENDS program.

Teacher's perceptions. It was observed in the responses of the participants that support and encouragement from the staff and administration affected the views and perceptions of the teachers regarding the of the FRIENDS program. According to participant 08, “anytime administration is supportive of a program it helps with implementation within the classroom.” As well, participant P03 stated,

Administration could support teacher to get training and can also ask teacher what they need. Having support and release time can make a big difference for teachers. Administration can touch base with the teachers at SBT meetings to see if the teacher is using the skills from program and if they have let the parents know.

Participant P06 expressed similar thoughts,

As an administrator, I can see that the teachers sometime take this program more as a break but the support from the school administration can change their thinking process. Teachers need to be encouraged to teach and make the connection.

Minimizing resistance. The analysis revealed that 37.5% of participants felt that support from school staff and administration helped to minimize the resistance of teachers towards the program. Support from administration encourages teachers and

consistency in support boosts the confidence level of the teachers, which can ultimately affect implementation efforts. As stated by participants P06 and PO3,

After the support from administration, the program has become a part of the culture and climate of the school, although there has been resistance every now and then and that has been minimized through the counselors and administrator going into classrooms and assisting teachers to implement the program.

Similarly, participant 03 stated, “having administration trained and offering teachers support if helpful for implementation and consistency. It also helps for teacher confidence and decreases teacher resistance.”

Improvement in classroom practices. It was also evident that the support from the administration and school staff has improved classroom practices of the teachers during the implementation of the FRIENDS program. As said by participant P05,

The administration knows that I am doing it and are not dictating that I have to do other programming. They are supportive and encouraging, so basically it is my classroom though and with teacher autonomy I can do what I want as long as it has a strong educational basis which this program really has.

Participant P07 made similar assertions,

Certainly, the support from the administration has helped. Anytime admin supports a program it helps for implementation in the classroom. Their support in getting the FRIENDS program of the ground is invaluable and has helped me to dedicate the time in class without feeling like I should be doing other things instead.

Clarity in goals and objectives. One of the participants remarked that the support provided by the administration helped in implementation of the program in the classroom through the clarity of the program goals and objectives. The objectives of the program were well understood by administration and were supported. Hence, the teacher was in a better position to focus on the implementation. As stated by the participant P07,

The goals and objectives of the program are brought into the general goals and objectives of the school. So then as a teacher, what you are trying to achieve is part and parcel with the school's focus. Therefore, any program that might contribute to the reduction of anxiety is embraced.

Also participant P08 narrated,

It is great to see admin support in program that is socially and emotionally based and the recognition by the administration how important the child's ability to self-regulate is. Having this as a focus of the school has helped me to implement the program in my classroom.

FRIENDS' language. It was reported that having common language and interventions assisted in changing the culture and climate within the school and further assisted students with the acquisition of these skills. As narrated by the participant P08,

By having the alignment of goals and objectives, you also found that there was more common language and interventions used in schools. This consistency in language and interventions really helped the kids in learning the program. It also helped in changing the culture and climate in the school.

Figure 13 illustrates the NVivo query results, which address the impact of support on the implementation of the FRIENDS program.

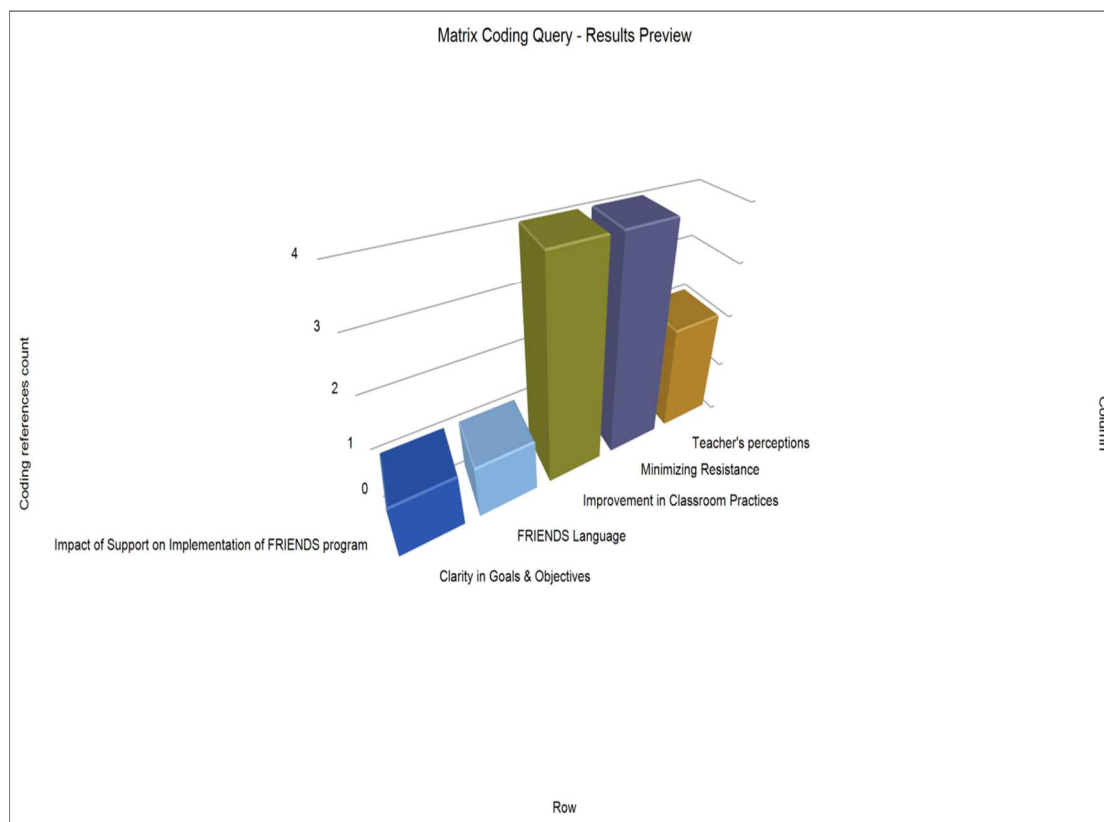


Figure 13. Impact of support on implementation of FRIENDS.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, I reiterated the research questions and discussed issues within the setting impacted participants at the time of the study. I also discussed demographic details of the participants, data collection strategies and the storage of data. I also presented some of my general observations garnered through my contact with the participants, the data analysis strategies used, as well as the evidence of trustworthiness of the data. I concluded the chapter with a thorough presentation of the results, which

were garnered through both hand coding, and the use of NVivo software. In Chapter 5 I provide an interpretation of the findings, discuss the limitations of the study, recommendations from this study and implications for future research and conclusions garnered from this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how teachers implemented the FRIENDS program in classrooms. The FRIENDS program is evidence-based with studies indicating that after completing the FRIENDS program, children self-reported lower scores for anxiety (Barrett et al., 2010; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, & Goddard, 2008) and depression (Barrett et al., 2010); further data indicated that after the FRIENDS program, children had increased scores for self-esteem and coping (Stallard et al, 2008). In spite of the research that the FRIENDS program worked when delivered in highly structured clinical (Lock and Barrett, 2003), community based (Farrell et al., 2005) or school trials (Schoenfeld & Mathur, 2009), there was little information available on fidelity of implementation when the program was delivered by classroom teachers. The central phenomenon of the research project was to determine how the FRIENDS program was implemented in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms and the factors that helped or hindered teachers in implementing the program with fidelity.

In this final chapter, I have presented information on the significance of this study, my interpretation of the key findings presented in Chapter 4, perspectives in relation to the literature and conceptual framework as presented in Chapter 2, the implications of this study for social change, and the implications for practice. I conclude with a discussion of recommendations for future research.

Significance and Importance of the Study

This research study is significant due to the empirical gap in the literature regarding how teachers implemented the FRIENDS program their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms. Not only was the program being used in school districts throughout British Columbia, it is also being used internationally, in Australia, Brazil, Finland, Hong Kong, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Singapore, Sweden, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, China, Greece, Cyprus, and Peru (MCFD, 2016). Although the program was internationally recognized as an evidence-based practice that had a positive effect on children's emotional resilience, including a reduction in their levels of anxiety and an increase in their self-esteem scores (Stallard et al., 2005), there had been very few studies on how the program was being implemented in schools by classroom teachers. In the evidence-based and research trials that have been conducted, a strict implementation protocol was adhered to. Prior to this study, little was known about how teachers were implementing the program in their classrooms and whether or not the implementation protocol teachers learned during their 1-day teacher training was being followed.

If evidence-based programs are not delivered according to program protocols, the teacher could be wasting valuable classroom time and resources by reducing the effect and the potential for the program to assist children and youth. According to Carroll et al. (2007), implementation fidelity can be seen as the moderator between the intervention and the outcome of the intervention. Poorly implemented programs have a diminished likelihood of success and decreased ability to teach children the skills set forth in the curriculum (Durlak, 2013). Durlak & DuPre (2008) found that the level of

implementation fidelity impacted program outcomes; therefore, when programs are implemented with fidelity, the results should mimic those found in research. By conducting this study, I gained insight into the practices of teachers as they pertained to their implementation of the FRIENDS program and determined factors that helped and hindered teachers in their implementation efforts.

This research has the potential to add to the body of literature on implementation fidelity in school-based programs, and specifically to the body of literature on implementation of the FRIENDS program. By understanding the factors that helped or hindered teachers to implement the program with fidelity, school districts can understand how to support their teachers to deliver programs with fidelity and therefore achieve the results found in research. Further, the FRIENDS program was created to help children learn skills to manage their anxiety. If teachers are spending valuable classroom time on the program, it is important the children learn the skills set forth in the curriculum and are in fact able to use skills and strategies to manage anxiety and build their resilience.

Interpretation of Findings

In this study, I focused on and addressed implementation of the FRIENDS program in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms. The experiences of teachers were connected through the three research questions and the semistructured interview questions that helped to answer each of the research questions. The following is an explanation of each research question and the themes that emerged from the semistructured interviews.

Research Question 1

RQ1: How do teachers describe their practice of implementation of the FRIENDS program in their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms?

In this first section, the background of the participants was explored in order to determine the impact that prior teaching experience, the personal background of teachers, and their education levels had on implementation of the FRIENDS program. Questions on the semistructured interview asked for current position, educational background, and the number of times the teacher had implemented this level of the FRIENDS program in their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms. Fifty percent of the participants were in a position in the district where they felt that roles and responsibilities of their position included support for teachers implementing the program in classrooms. Three of the eight participants assisted teachers by going into their classrooms and teaching the curriculum for them or supported them to teach the curriculum in the classroom. One of the eight participants viewed their role as supporting teachers to have the materials and supplies needed to teach the program and being a source of encouragement for teachers.

Understanding the educational background of the participants was helpful in determining whether themes would arise around an individual's educational and professional background and their personal comfort in delivering the program. Analysis of the responses indicated that four of the participants had a master's degree in education while two participants had started their master's studies. The remaining two participants had a bachelor's degree in education. Of the four participants with a master's degree, three were in counseling. One of three with a masters in counseling discussed having an

extensive background working with anxiety. Regardless of an individual teacher's educational background, all teachers reported feeling comfortable with the curriculum and ready to implement it after their 1-day teacher training. There was no apprehension or angst on the part of the teachers regarding implementing an anxiety-reduction curriculum. Therefore, teachers left their 1-day teacher training feeling comfortable with the content and curriculum of the program and did not feel uneasy about teaching the subject matter.

Another important detail provided by the participants in understanding their experience with the FRIENDS program was the number of times the participant implemented the FRIENDS program. The analysis indicated that the FRIENDS program was implemented by the participants between one and 10 times. Four of the participants implemented the program for more than five times (5-10 times) while the remaining four had implemented the program under five times. Participants identified that when implementing the program for the first time they tried to do most of the exercises in the book and cover more content than was needed for their students' understanding. One participant found that after doing this the first time, it was easier to not do all of the exercises and just ensure student understanding of the module prior to moving on. This participant was subsequently able to provide the program over 10 to 12 weeks and did not feel bogged down by the amount of content. The other teachers discussed spending more time with this process. Teachers reported taking several years before they felt that they did not have to cover every exercise and have kids complete all of the content of the book. New facilitators just finishing the program for the first or second time were

covering the entire content and finding the program took way longer to implement than was stipulated in their teacher training. For some teachers this could be the reason they chose not to continue to implement the program after their first year. It is important that facilitators of the FRIENDS program ensure that teachers understand what coverage of the content means in the FRIENDS program, and although there are a lot of exercises listed in each module, this is intended to give choices to teachers and not a mandate on what they are expected to teach.

I found it interesting that the teachers who agreed to be part of the study were teachers who intended to continue with the program. I did not have one participant who stated, "I did the program once, did not like it, and would not do it again." I do not know if I was not able to capture such individuals for this study or if once teachers implement the program for the first time, they decide to continue with it on a yearly basis while teaching that grade grouping.

Participants discussed their perceptions of the program and the modules contained in the program. Participants spoke of the length of the modules and the content in the modules and the overall perception of children regarding the content. Teachers also agreed on which modules were easy and most engaging for children and which ones were harder to teach and took more time than allocated in the facilitator manual. Participants shared that the modules on feelings and relaxation were the easiest to teach; they found the changing and challenging thoughts module difficult to teach and identified the coping step plan as the hardest module to teach and for children to understand. Teachers commented on how difficult it was to get through the modules in the allotted time

especially with the more difficult modules to teach such as the coping step plan. Again, participants spoke of trying to get through all of the exercises in each module, which would have impacted their ability to complete the module in the allotted time.

Participants had a misunderstanding of what content and coverage of the modules meant and how many exercises they needed to complete with their class. Teachers are doing too much, and as a result, they are getting bogged down. Teachers are also augmenting the program with materials from other programs the children had covered in school, which would again increase the length of the lessons and the time needed to complete the curriculum. Another frustration voiced during this section of the interviews was the feeling that the teachers needed to have children complete the workbooks, which was not only challenging for children who were below grade level for reading and writing but also was visually overwhelming for both students and teachers. Teachers were leaving their 1-day training not fully understanding that the lessons in the modules are a choice and that content and coverage is about students understanding the objectives of the lesson before moving on.

Research Question 2

RQ2: How does the individual teacher's practice of implementing the FRIENDS program differ from what is found in the program guidelines?

Themes identified through this research and raised in chapter three which pertained to research question 2 included: adaptations for reading and writing; support for teachers; perceptions of teachers; change of culture and climate in the class; and implementation practices. The biggest difference between what teachers do in their

classrooms versus what is included in the program guidelines was the lack of booster sessions and lack of inclusion or involvement of parents.

Teachers made adaptations to the program for reading and writing skills; this did not change the content of the program but definitely caused them to spend more time with implementation than is specified in the facilitators manual. Teachers found that they would have to spend a great deal of time reviewing the exercises with the children, reading out the content, using the word wall, having everything on the white board and finding alternative ways for children to share their experiences, such as drawing a picture or engaging in pair and share activities. Teachers found this part of implementation onerous; they spent a great deal of time finding other ways to deliver the curriculum and content and adapting for low readers and non-writers. If the student manual could be updated and not include as many reading and writing activities, it would assist teachers in their fidelity of implementation as they would not be bogged down on how to deliver the content, and could move straight to delivery of the content.

Another area identified by teachers as an adaptation was the support they received from the school counselor or administrator. This would include the school counselor doing the first few sessions of the program and then the classroom teacher taking over. The school administrator would also help as necessary; this was beneficial for teachers and their implementation practices. Teachers found the support very helpful and appreciated watching the school counselor implement lessons; this increased their confidence in their own ability to implement the program. The down side raised by individuals in district or itinerant roles was that the perception of the classroom teacher

could hinder implementation. For example, when classroom teachers left the room during implementation of the program and did not want to be a part of it, it gave a message to the children that the teacher did not value the program and that the program was only something that was discussed when the facilitator was in the room. Some teachers felt that implementing the program was not part of their job and showed little interest in the program. Often teachers would use this time to prep for other classroom lessons or activities. The disinterest on the part of the classroom teacher impacted the students' willingness to engage in the lessons, talk about their feelings and take risks as they saw their classroom teacher wasn't willing to do the same.

Participants were of the view that the classroom teachers are in a better position to implement the program than school counselors or district staff because they have the ability to infuse the language of FRIENDS throughout the day and make it an integral part of the curriculum. By infusing the language of FRIENDS throughout the day teachers change the culture and climate of their classrooms and show children how the FRIENDS skills can be used daily to assist with everyday issues and concerns. Therefore, it is important to set guidelines for team teaching and have teachers agree to the guidelines before starting. That is, the teacher and itinerant staff would have a discussion regarding what implementation would look like in the class. Specifically, the agreement could stipulate that both parties would be present and engaged; if the teacher does not yet have their FRIENDS teacher training, they can still participate, be engaged in the program, and assist the facilitator with managing the class and discussions.

Research question 2 was set out to determine how the individual teacher's practice of implementing the FRIENDS program differed from what was found in the program guidelines. Specifically, I was interested in determining the level of implementation fidelity, which according to Carrol et al. (2007), is a measure of program adherence. Teachers unanimously stated that they followed the content and frequency guidelines as indicated in the implementation protocols. Teachers discussed running the program at least weekly. As well, teachers stated they typically spent between 45 minutes and 60 minutes for each program session. As far as dosage, teachers described initially doing every exercise within the book and taking much longer than expected to get through the program. One teacher implemented the program weekly for a year and only finished up to section "1" in the book. Teachers stated that the duration of the program was much longer than the program guidelines stipulated but did attest to the fact that once they let go of doing every exercise, they were able to complete the program in 10 to 12 weeks. The duration of time it took teachers to get through the program impacted their implementation efforts therefore it is important that FRIENDS program facilitators discuss this with teachers during the 1-day teacher training. Facilitators could discuss the fact that teachers love the exercises and find that they are all great however, it is important to only pick a few exercises in each section; once the students understand the goals and objectives of the lesson, then move onto the next module. Facilitators could share that other teachers who have tried to do the whole program found themselves very bogged down and subsequently, took much longer to complete the program. In addition, facilitators could remind teachers that some of the lessons they did not cover during

program implementation could be use as booster sessions, as they have finished implementing the program with their class.

The majority of the teachers in the study did state that they did not use booster sessions or involve parents in the implementation of the program. Teachers identified that one way they strayed from implementation protocol was around booster sessions. Only one out of eight of the participants, or 12.5% incorporated booster sessions after the completion of the FRIENDS program. The one participant who did the booster sessions stated that this only happened when the program was presented over 20 sessions and therefore time was not an issue in implementation. Typically, teachers found that they only had time to implement the program and then would move onto other things. This was especially the case when district staff came into the classroom and supported teachers with implementation. If the program is not being referred to after implementation, then it does not provide students with the idea that these are skills they can use every single day. When district staff are coming into the room to support teachers the timeframe for booster sessions should also be incorporated into the agreement. It would be helpful for teachers to be reminded of the importance of booster sessions and shown how they could infuse them into the regular curriculum. For example, one participant talked about a big speech that students do at this grade level. When presenting the idea of the big speech teachers could discuss the coping step plan in FRIENDS and the step by step process the children learned, which would help them to tackle this big project.

A final theme that emerged in this section was the lack of inclusion of parents into the FRIENDS program implementation. Twenty five percent of the participants stated they sent home information in a newsletter and then occasionally would send homework home. Other teachers shared that they would send homework home but rarely got anything back from the students. As well, teachers stated they would encourage their students to talk about the content at home with their parents. By not including parents, kids learned the skills in isolation. Parents are not able to reinforce the language or lessons of FRIENDS because they themselves are not aware of them. This does impact overall fidelity of implementation. The program recognizes the need to include parents so that children use the language of friends in all environments. One way of supporting teachers to include parents would be to host parent sessions as a district initiative rather than an individual teacher initiative. Just prior to fall implementation of the program all parents of children within the classes receiving the FRIENDS program could be invited to a parent presentation. This would take some of the pressure off the classroom teacher. Teachers would then just need to follow up with homework which parents would be expecting, and ideally reinforcing.

Research Question 3

RQ3: Why do teachers make the decisions they do regarding implementation; are there factors that have impacted implementation and fidelity of implementation?

In order to answer this research question the data indicated the decisions were complex and better understood in context. The context included the reasons teachers chose to get trained in the program, their thoughts about the program at the time of

training, and their thoughts about implementing the program after their training. These factors all tied into a teacher's decision to implement the program. Further, data was presented on the factors teachers identified that pose a challenge for implementation as well as those factors that positively impact implementation.

The first section of the analysis of research question 3 included gaining an understanding of why teachers chose to be trained in and implement the FRIENDS program in their classrooms. Subthemes that were identified through both NVivo and hand coding results included helping children with anxiety, personal interest and skills acquisition, recommendation and support/mentoring by professionals.

Analysis of the responses indicated that participants were interested in helping children learn skills to manage their anxiety. Sixty-two and one half percent of the participants highlighted that they wanted to help children learn to manage their anxiety as a key reason they chose to be trained in the FRIENDS program. Participants also indicated that another reason they chose to be trained in the FRIENDS program was their own personal interest in the program and increasing their skill set. Thirty-seven and one half percent of participants indicated that their interest in taking the program was because of their own personal interest and skill acquisition. This data indicated that teachers are getting involved with the program because of a genuine interest in improving the skill set of children to manage anxiety as well as their own skill set to work with children who struggle with anxiety.

Two other subthemes that arose when participants spoke about the reason they chose to be trained in the program was because of recommendations and support or

mentoring. Participants stated that the program was recommended because of the number of students with needs a teacher had within the classroom. The recommendation was made during school based team meeting, as it was felt that this program could assist to meet the varying needs of the students on Individual Education Plans. The program was encouraged by school administration and was part of the scope and sequence, therefore, it was expected that all Grade 4 teachers in the building deliver the program within their classrooms. Finally, participants spoke of support and mentoring by professionals in order to run the program in class. Twenty-five percent of the participants stated that they chose to take the program because they would get support from the school counselor.

Participants of the qualitative study were asked about their thoughts regarding the FRIENDS program at the time of their training. Coding indicated their thoughts included being excited, having support of colleagues, how easy the program seemed to implement and feeling ready or prepared to implement the program. Participants expressed excitement about the program and figuring out how they were going to take what they learned in their training and make it work in their classrooms. Another participant spoke of being excited to start the program within the cohort of teachers who took the training together. Participants shared that taking the training with colleagues was great because it offered the opportunity for collegial support. That is, the participants were able to share ideas, brainstorm and support each other with the implementation of the program.

After participants completed their 1-day teacher training, they stated that the program appeared easy to implement. Participants commented that they liked the layout and felt very comfortable with the training materials as they were going through the

manual with their facilitator. After taking the training participants expressed that, they felt ready to implement the program. Teachers stated they had no apprehension about presenting the content and felt it would be great for the students within the class. One challenge participants stated they felt after their training was regarding having the content of the program only available in English. Twenty-five percent of the participants were of the view that the language can be a challenge in the implementation process of the FRIENDS program. The content of the program book is in English and this can be problematic in a French immersion school where the majority of class time was spent on French language content.

A subtheme that emerged for participants post training and assisted with their implementation efforts was in regards to support of the school administrator or school counselor. Participants were aware of their ability to access support from the school counselor to start implementing the program as long as they took the training and took over program implementation, post training. The issue of support was also raised in the context of having support from colleagues who took the training together and were able to help and support each other's implementation efforts.

Another subtheme that emerged while investigating research question three was the challenges faced by teachers while implementing the program. The themes that arose included: language issues, teacher's attitude, classroom practices, curriculum and time management and the book content and overall look. Some of the participants highlighted an important issue they faced during the implementation of FRIENDS program in English, in a French Immersion school. Some teachers were not comfortable teaching the

content in English for a variety of reasons including the amount of time the program took and therefore, the amount of instruction that was not given in French. For teachers whose first language is French a difficulty expressed was knowing the right English word to use to describe complex issues and feelings. For these teachers it would be very helpful to have the content of the program in French. This would ensure the amount of time spent on English content within a French immersion program was not an issue, as well, would ensure French teachers were comfortable with the language and expressing thoughts and ideas within the language. Within the data, French teachers also noted that English is the fun time for students; that is, in English they typically get to read books at their developmental level, they have fun with their friends, and do activities like poetry. Teachers stated that this took away from the seriousness of the FRIENDS program lessons. Therefore, by offering the program also in French it would alleviate the concerns of French teachers in an immersion program.

A challenge identified by participants who taught the program in classrooms for classroom teachers was the impact of the teacher's attitude or perception about the program on implementation. Specifically, teachers felt that not all of their colleagues saw the value in the program and had resistance towards the program. Furthermore, it was noted that some teachers did not want to talk about their feelings and had a hard time taking risks; this impacted implementation in the program as it gave the children the message that the content was not important. District staff and school counselors found this to be an issue when they presented the program in classrooms, for classroom teachers. These district staff and school counselors explained that classroom practices can

be difficult when teachers are not interested in the program and do not engage with the class regarding the content of the program, or when the teacher leaves the room while the district staff or school counselor are teaching the program. Sixty-seven percent of the itinerant teachers found this to be problematic; the one that did not was in a school where there was an expectation that the classroom teacher takes the training and then takes over the implementation of the program. This issue was also raised in research question two, however, that was specifically around implementation and how their individual practice of implementation differed from program guidelines. The resolve would however be the same as stated earlier. If the program is going to be implemented by district staff or school counselors, or supported by these individuals then agreements need to be made between the teacher and the copresented prior to program implementation. With the agreement the teachers would discuss each person's roles and responsibilities, the expectation that the classroom teacher infuse the language of FRIENDS into other areas of the curriculum and discuss it outside of the regular weekly FRIENDS lessons. Further, it would be helpful if the agreement spoke to FRIENDS homework as well as the incorporation of booster sessions after the program has been implemented in the classroom.

Participants identified curriculum and time management as a challenge in implementing the FRIENDS program. Participants stated that the length of the program and modules are difficult, especially when the program is viewed as not a part of the curriculum, but rather something teachers do on top of the curriculum. One participant did identify that the FRIENDS program does fit well within the new British Columbia

Ministry of Education Curriculum. Given that the FRIENDS program does fit well with the new British Columbia Ministry of Education Curriculum it is important for facilitators of FRIENDS program to ensure that teacher participants leave their training with a solid understanding of how the curriculum fits and ensure that teachers do not feel like the program is an add on. As far as the time management issue, this fits in with teachers covering more of the content than necessary and also trying to infuse content from other programs into FRIENDS. This issue should be addressed in teacher training. Instead of reexplaining other programs and how they fit with the FRIENDS program, teachers should continue with the FRIENDS curriculum as it is laid out in their facilitator manual. At times, they may want to say to their class; “wow, this sounds like some of the same information we covered last term when we discussed growth mind set” and leave it at that. By going back into the other programs and trying to cover all of the lessons in a module teachers are finding that the FRIENDS program is taking too long and feeling bogged down trying to deliver all of it.

Sixty-two and one-half percent of the participants identified the lengthy and outdated student manual as a challenge for implementation. Participants identified that the book is lengthy and the thought of getting through all of the materials is daunting. The book also contains a lot of writing and this can be difficulty for students. Teachers identified that the content of the book was too much for students below grade level. The teachers were clear that having the book revised or revamped was important to them. The book and lessons need to contain less language and also infuse other forms of media, like You Tube clips and the pictures within the books need to be updated.

A second subtheme which emerged in investigating factors which impacted teacher implementation of the FRIENDS program included support from school staff and administration. One hundred percent of the participants commented on support received from the school counselor or administrator and the impact of that support on their implementation efforts.

Of the eight participants in the study, five were in roles where receiving support from the school counselor in implementing the program was a possibility. Of the five participants, 60% received direct support from the school counselor with implementing the program and found that support to be helpful and encouraging, as well as providing opportunities to learn about implementation practices in real life scenarios. One hundred percent of the participants commented on support of their school administrator and the impact that support had on their program implementation efforts. Seventy-five percent of the participants spoke to the positive impact of administrative support while the other 25% spoke to negative impact of not having administrative support.

A third subtheme which emerged in investigating factors which impacted teacher implementation of the FRIENDS program included the impact of support on the implementation of the FRIENDS program. Within this subtheme, issues that arose included: teacher perceptions, eliminating resistance, improvement in classroom practices, clarity in goals and objectives and FRIENDS language.

Thirty-seven and a half percent of participants felt that support from school staff and administration helped to minimize the resistance of teachers towards the program. Support from administration encourages teachers and consistency in support boosts the

confidence level of the teachers, which can ultimately impact implementation efforts.

Participants commented that another positive impact of having support on implementation, included improvements in classroom practices.

Support from the administration and school staff improved classroom practices of teachers during the implementation of the FRIENDS program. Twenty-five percent of participants commented on how administrative support improved classroom practices and made it possible for teachers to dedicate the time they needed to complete the FRIENDS program and not feel like they should be doing other things instead. In addition, support of administrative also helped to provide clarity of goals and objectives. The goals and objectives of the program were well understood by administration and supported. This ensured the teacher was in the best possible position to focus on implementation. Finally, participants stated that having administrative support helped create a common language and interventions in the school; this further assisted student with the acquisition of skills and helped change the culture and climate of the school. Support of administrators and teachers came up in different aspects of this research but the underlying message from teachers was that the support of administrators, district teachers, school counsellors and colleagues was an important aspect throughout their training, program implementation, and assisted with their fidelity of implementation.

Research question three asked why teachers make the decisions they do regarding implementation; are there factors that have impacted implementation and fidelity of implementation? As far as implementing the program itself, some teachers became aware of the program and were interested in it; teachers felt it would be a good way to help

children with anxiety issues, and others were supported by their administrator or school counselor. After training all participants discussed an eagerness or excitement to get started implementing the program and felt that they had everything they needed to and felt confident in their ability to do so. The only difficulty mentioned regarding program implementation was by French Immersion teachers who had difficulty with the FRIENDS program being offered only in English. Once teachers started implementing the program adaptations needed to be made for reading and writing skills of children. Teachers spoke about the workbook being too content heavy with too much reading and writing as well, they talked about the pictures in the workbook being outdated and the perception that gave children that the content of the books was too young. As a result, teachers found alternative ways to deliver the curriculum while staying true to it. Some teachers spoke about reading sections to children and having them draw, or have their answers scribed. Teachers did state that when issues arose on the playground or in the classroom they would pull out content from the FRIENDS book to address it or from other programs (like Zones of Regulation or iMinds). So decisions regarding implementation were impacted by current classroom issues and the feeling that this time needed to be used to give programming to address the specific issue currently impacting the class.

Perspectives in Relation to the Literature

In this study, I was able to extend the knowledge in the field by providing case study/participant data on the lived experiences of teachers who were implementing the FRIENDS program in their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms. Within the literature there was

information on the efficacy of the program when conducted in highly structured school, research or clinical trials (Barrett et al., 2001; Farrell & Barrett, 2005; Minde et al., 2010; Stallard et al., 2007). This trial included strict implementation protocol and adherence. The gap in the literature was that little information was known on how teachers were implementing the program real life classroom situations. That is, little was known on whether the implementation protocols given to teachers during their 1-day teacher training were being followed.

Domitrovich et al., (2008) provided a conceptual framework within which the authors specifically addressed the period of time after a district had decided to adopt a program but before it has become an entrenched part of the curriculum. The goal of this study was to understand the characteristics of the intervention, how the level of administrative support effected fidelity and if there were internal policies or practices that helped or hindered teacher implementation. In assessing the characteristics of the intervention, I was able to determine how the FRIENDS program was implemented in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms within the district; that is, how the individual teacher's practice of program implementation differed from the implementation guidelines. I was not however able to assess the intervention strategies or innovations used by teachers that were linked to the desired outcomes of the program or the objectives of the program. This was because teachers did not have any additional material prepared for their presentation of the FRIENDS program, but would rather, on an ad hoc basis; supplement the material from the book with you tube videos or materials from other programs including mind-up, WITS, the Zones of Regulation and iMinds. The teachers did not write out formal lesson

plans for the inclusion of extra material but would base it on how the class was doing and whether or not they felt that, the material needed to be expanded upon or brought to life using current videos to engage children.

According to Domitrovich et al. (2008) the intervention support system is the lens through which the intervention operates; this could include internal policies, practices or support from school administration. I was able to determine that there were no formal district policies regarding the FRIENDS program and that the decision to implement typically falls within teacher autonomy. Some teachers discussed the school expectation that if they are teaching Grade 4, then they will deliver the FRIENDS program in their classroom. Specifically, it was stated that the FRIENDS program in Grade 4 falls within the scope and sequence within a particular school. This was a school based initiative and not a district initiative or policy. Support from school administration and the school counselor was found to be an influential factor for teachers. One hundred percent of the participants spoke about the impact of administrative support on their implementation efforts within the program. Seventy-five percent of the participants spoke to the positive impact of administrative support while the other 25% spoke to negative impact of not having administrative support. As well as assisting teachers and building their confidence with the program and changing their perception of the program, the support received also assisted in eliminating resistance on the part of teachers and improving classroom practices.

In addressing the lens of support as put forth by Domitrovich et al. (2008) an issue that was highlighted within this study was when the program was implemented by district

staff or the school counselor instead of the classroom teacher. The results of the interviews indicated that some teachers used this as an opportunity to stay involved in the program during weekly sessions and continue with the language of FRIENDS throughout the week and the year. Other teachers however would use this as prep time, leave the room and work on other things. The FRIENDS program was only referred to when the implementer was in the room. The lack of interest by the classroom teacher also impacted the children's level of interest in the program. Essentially I found that having the support of a team teacher who is skilled and versed in the program could be very beneficial for teachers however the roles and expectations of each teacher must be made clear at the outset. This would circumvent the issue of classroom teachers leaving the room during implementation and giving children the message that this is a topic we only discuss during program delivery.

Carroll et al (2007) also provided a conceptual framework for implementation fidelity. According to the authors, a measurement of implementation fidelity is a measure of program adherence. Program adherence is comprised of four sub-categories: content, frequency, duration and dosage (Carroll et al., 2007). I used this definition of program adherence to determine what Domitrovich et al. (2008) referred to as characteristics of the intervention. Teachers unanimously stated that they followed the content and frequency guidelines as indicated in the implementation protocols. Teachers discussed implementing the program at least weekly. As well, teachers stated they typically spent between 45 minutes and 60 minutes for each program session; teacher implementation protocols state 30 to 45 minutes per week. The content of the sessions did appear

muddied at times as teachers would bring in content from other programs and because this was not a formal process, I was not able to assess this content to determine whether the goals and objectives of the lessons were adhered to. As far as dosage, teachers described initially doing every exercise within the book and taking much longer than to get through the program. One teacher ran the program weekly for a year and only finished up to section “1” in the book. Teachers also stated that the duration took much longer than program guidelines stipulated but did attest to the fact that once they let go of doing every exercise they were able to complete the program in 10 to 12 weeks. The data indicated that the frequency, duration and dosage were consistent with program implementation guidelines, and teacher’s reported covering the content of the book while also including supplemental content.

In the implementation research, Neil and Christensen (2007) stated that future research should focus on implementation of school-based prevention programs for anxiety with classroom teachers to determine if more training, guidance or support could increase teacher confidence in the delivery of the programs, which would subsequently increase intervention effects. Teachers attested to the fact that guidance and support was beneficial in their implementation practices. Teachers highlighted support from district staff or school counselors who come into the classroom to assist them, and were also there answer questions. As stated above, participants also discussed the importance of having the support of administration in their implementation efforts.

In their review of nearly 500 research studies between 1979 and 2006, Durlak and DuPre (2008) found that program outcomes are reflective of the level of implementation

achieved. The authors stated that expecting near perfect implementation fidelity is unrealistic and that positive results have been obtained with implementation levels of 60%. Further, they found that few studies have obtained implementation levels of greater than 80%. In this research, I found that teachers are implementing the program according to program protocols. Teachers reported that they cover the content of the program as well as bringing in additional content to supplement the learning of students. I am not able to speak to the content that was brought in and whether it met the goals and objectives of the lessons. Participants reported conducting weekly sessions, which were 45 to 60 minutes in duration, going through the lessons sequentially in the book and not skipping over lessons. If anything, teachers were bogged down by trying to do too many lessons in the book and covering more content than is necessary to ensure student understanding of the module. Although participants extensively covered the materials in the book, they fell short with involving parents in the program and doing booster sessions after completion of the program. Given the quantity that teacher's covered it is fair to estimate that they have in fact completed 60 to 80% of the program content and delivered the program with fidelity, or at least enough fidelity to achieve the results found in clinical and research-based trials.

Implications for Social Change

The FRIENDS program is currently being used in school districts throughout British Columbia, Canada as well as internationally in the following countries: Australia, Brazil, Finland, Hong Kong, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Singapore, Sweden, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, China, Greece, Cyprus, and Peru

(MCFD, 2016). The program is being used in spite of the fact that to date little is known on how classroom teachers are implementing the program within their Grade 4 and 5 classrooms. According to Carroll et al., achieving high implementation fidelity is one of the best ways to replicate the success achieved in research especially when this research is being brought from trials to real world settings (Carroll et al., 2007). By conducting this study, I have determined what implementation looks like in real world classrooms and those factors that help or hinder teacher implementation efforts. By sharing this knowledge schools and districts around the world can ensure that they are supporting teachers to implement the FRIENDS program with fidelity to ensure that students are receiving the same results that have been found in evidence-based trials. Not only will this have a direct impact on positive social change for children, their families, the communities in which they live and the school systems in which they develop and learn.

Recommendations for Practice

In this study, I determined that that teachers enjoyed implementing the FRIENDS program in their classrooms and felt the lesson plans and objectives were relevant, however, the manuals are in need of updating. Teachers described the manuals as outdated and stated that the illustrations within the manuals made children feel like the content was too young, and therefore they did not take it seriously. Further, teachers talked about the amount of reading and writing within the manuals and the sheer size of the manuals. Moving to an online format for the manual may be more effective. This would allow the resources to be regularly updated. Further, children would not be presented with a large manual that looks daunting and overwhelming. The exercises need

to focus on less reading and writing and more on alternative ways to engage the class in the curriculum. By having the manuals online, then online resources could also be referred to or used within the curriculum.

Teachers discussed the necessity of incorporating online resources into their implementation of the FRIENDS program to get children on board and engaged in the content. Teachers would search You Tube for clips that highlighted the lessons within the manual and gave alternative ways of delivering the content. Teachers clearly stated that it would be helpful for them if the program included these resources and they did not have to search for or find resources on their own. Further, by providing links to resources the FRIENDS program is able to ensure that the objectives of the lessons are being met through the use of the supplemental resources being used or referred to. The incorporation of more online resources would also help children to feel the program is more relevant and engaging. A central teacher website for the FRIENDS program would be helpful. Teachers could use this forum to discuss what went well and what did not and show how they augmented lessons with other materials. This teacher forum would not only provide support and resources but would also have up to date information from teachers about the latest websites or you tube clips that have been helpful. Further, by seeing the content that teachers are using program developers will have a better idea of whether or not the inclusion of materials meets the goals and objectives of the lessons it is meant to supplement.

Teachers within French Immersion schools feel it is important the manual and workbook be offered in French. Within the province of British Columbia, there are

currently 60,003 students registered in French Immersion or Francophone programs and 634,000 students registered in public and independent schools in British Columbia (Province of British Columbia, n.d.) Therefore, 10.56% of our student population in British Columbia are in schools where they predominately speak French. By making the resources available in French teachers could include lessons within the French content and ensure they are meeting guidelines regarding the amount of French instruction students are receiving. Further, this would alleviate angst of francophone teachers who struggle with finding the appropriate words to explain some of the more complex areas of the FRIENDS curriculum.

Another implication for practice raised from this research is the necessity that facilitators in the FRIENDS program ensure teacher participants understand that covering the entire book is not a requirement of program implementation. During training, the issues of content and coverage need to be covered by the facilitator of the training. This will ensure that participants understand that they can focus on a few lessons within the module, ensure their students understand the main goals and objectives of the lesson and then move onto the next module. Teachers need to be reminded that they do not have to cover all of the content, just because it is there.

Trainers should spend more time discussing parent involvement. Specifically, facilitators need to have a discussion with teachers regarding how they will incorporate parents into the sessions. In addition, trainers could discuss the whether it would be possible for individual districts to host a parent night, where parents are invited to attend and learn about the FRIENDS program and lesson modules their child will be learning in

school. By having a district evening, this would take pressure off the individual teachers to take on the presentation on their own and they could receive assistance from their District FRIENDS Liaison. Further parents could be incorporated through homework; parents would be advised of the homework aspect of the program during the parent presentation and be encouraged to ask their children about it. As an example, the child could lead the family through a progressive muscle relaxation exercise or show them what they learned about changing red thoughts into green thoughts. The program offers many options for teachers in this regard so the teacher does not have to come up with ideas on their own. Another option for including parents is to send home a letter at the beginning of the FRIENDS sessions. The letter should incorporate information on the modules and that program homework will be coming home once a week on a specified day. Again, this allows parents to look out for homework and ask their children about it. It would be helpful for the FRIENDS facilitators to highlight the importance of including parents in the lessons, during the teacher training.

Another recommendation for practice is the inclusion of booster sessions. It is important for FRIENDS trainers to reinforce the importance of booster sessions with teachers during the one-day teacher training. Trainers could discuss how booster sessions are one area that has been neglected by other teachers and why. Facilitators could then follow up this discussion with a conversation about ways to include booster sessions into the regular classroom activities. For example, when a student is having difficulty with a math question and engaging in negative self-talk, how can they use the FRIENDS lessons to cope? As well as implementing informal ways of incorporating the language of

FRIENDS throughout the curriculum, teachers could also set up times to do formal booster lessons. The program guidelines call for two booster sessions. These could be incorporated into a project the students are working on so the students can see how the FRIENDS skills can be used everyday. In instances where the program is being cotaught, it is important that booster sessions are part of the discussion regarding roles and responsibilities of each teacher.

One implementation issue that was raised in this research occurred when district personnel or school counsellors are implementing the program for classroom teachers, it is important to ensure you have an agreement in place. In the agreement, the teacher will participant and be part of all of the FRIENDS language and use the language throughout the week and year with students. Further, teachers can assist during the lessons by addressing behaviors which arise or reinforcing class wide behavior plans or systems in place. In the agreement, the teachers would also discuss how they will incorporate parents and booster sessions. It would be helpful if an example of an agreement was provided to teachers at their teacher training session.

Support is also an area that teachers consider critical during implementation. Teachers in the study all agreed that having their administrator's support was helpful for their implementation efforts; it boosted confidence and minimized resistance on the part of teachers. Administrators are encouraged to learn about the program, its goals and objectives, and use the language in schools to augment the classroom learning. FRIENDS liaisons could be encouraged to present information on the FRIENDS program at an Elementary Administrator Meeting. In the presentation, the liaison could highlight some

of the lessons students learn and the language of the FRIENDS program. By administrators understanding the program, they are in a better position to support teachers and students. Students could also receive a certificate of completion when they finish the program; the certificate could be presented by the school administrator and shared with parents. Another way in which administrators could support teachers to do the program is by providing teachers with time to meet with colleagues also implementing the program. Ideally, it would be very effective to have a start date for the program within the district. The teachers implementing the program could meet a few times through the 12-week program, whether in person or virtually, to discuss concepts, ideas, and to provide one another with support. Teachers also identified the support of school counselors as being helpful in their implementation efforts. Therefore, it is important that school counselors within districts are encouraged to take the FRIENDS training and support teachers in implementing the program. The support is important for all teachers but new teachers find it particularly helpful and in fact knowing they would get this support was a key factor in deciding to take the training.

Limitations of the Study

This study was focused on a specific sample of teachers from a small district in the interior of the province of British Columbia. This limits the transferability of the findings to other contexts and populations. Another limitation of the study included the small sample size, which also decreases the generalizability of the results. In order to mitigate against the sample size limitation, I documented my sampling procedure and any decisions regarding sampling and saturation of data in my reflective journal. Another

limitation of the study was the inability to make causal inferences from the data, as I am unable to rule out alternative explanations. I remained cognizant of this during my data collection, data analysis and my findings from the study, as the limited number of teachers interviewed did not allow me to make generalizations to the population of teachers.

A limitation, which arose during the study that I did not anticipate, was the fact that several teachers reported teaching the different levels of the FRIENDS program. This resulted in teachers not necessarily recalling how many times they have taught the program and when they took their training for a particular level of the program. Otherwise, having a variety of experiences at different levels of the program did not seem to impact implementation fidelity as it pertained to the Grade 4 & 5 program. Finally, teachers relying on their memory of their implementation practices could also be a limitation of the study. According to Polkinghorne, data about human experience has inherent limitations because it is dependent on a participants' ability to reflect on their own experience and effectively communicate their experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). By engaging in memberchecking I was able to ensure that my understanding of the participant's experience was an accurate reflection of their individual experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should incorporate observations of teachers conducting the FRIENDS program in their classrooms. By having observations conducted of program implementation, the observer could gauge various aspects of implementation fidelity. Observers could determine adherence to the program guidelines as set for the in the 1-day

teacher training, the quality of delivery of the program, the amount of content teachers cover within their delivery of the program, the responsiveness of participants and whether the objectives of each lesson were met prior to moving onto the next lesson. Furthermore, observers would give a clear picture regarding the content delivered to students during program implementation, the frequency of program implementation, the duration of session and the dosage students receive. This would also allow future researchers to determine the amount of parent involvement and homework given as well as the use of booster sessions and the percentage of content included in each area. Another strategy a future researcher could employ is the use of teacher weekly journals.

By incorporating a weekly journal, teachers would self-report, at the time of implementation and key factors regarding implementation. For example, teachers would report on the aims of their session during the week, the time spent the activities they used, the extent to which they felt the students understood the concepts presented and programming or other materials used to augment the FRIENDS lessons. Further, teachers could use this format to report on how they attempted to engage parents, for example, through homework and whether or not that engagement happened. By using a teacher diary system, this would mitigate against the limitation of teachers having to recall their experiences with the program long after they have completed the implementation process.

Future research could also look at the exercises within the modules and determine which lessons are most important, and which lessons are more supplemental in nature. Knowing exactly which lessons should be given would assist new teachers to not feel like they have to do everything. Further, the supplemental lessons could then be used only

when the students are not fully understanding the concepts or with individual students who need supplemental work on the modules. School Counselors could use some of the supplemental lessons in their 1:1 work with students.

Another area for future research is reaching those teachers who only implemented the program once and determining the factors that stopped them from continuing with it. Was it something about program that could be fixed or altered? Did they agree with teachers in this study that the content was too much or too onerous? Alternatively, perhaps they did not feel like anxiety was an issue for the children they work with? This information would be helpful in looking at potential changes in the program to accommodate teachers.

Summary and Conclusions

By conducting this study, I was able to ascertain that teachers are following the program sequence and teaching the modules in order, as per implementation protocols. If anything, new teachers within their first few years of implementing the FRIENDS program are becoming bogged down by trying to do every exercise in the manual; subsequently implementation is taking much longer than teachers originally anticipated. With experience teachers let go of their need to cover the entire content of the workbook and focus more specifically on children learning the lessons goals and objectives and then moving onto the next module.

One area teachers fell short with implementation was concerning incorporating parents and program booster sessions. The lack of inclusion of parents and booster sessions seemed to be related to the time it took to get through the program. Support of

administration and district staff or the school counselors played an integral part in motivating teachers to take the training and implement the program in their classrooms. Given the level of implementation fidelity of teachers when implementing the program, teachers can expect to be achieving the results for their students that have been found in clinical and research-based trials. By teaching the FRIENDS program in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms, teachers are in fact assisting students to lower their anxiety and build their resilience and self-esteem.

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Appendix A: Participant Interview Questions

This is a list of the main questions that will be asked in individual interviews, however, it does not contain the individual probes that may or may not be used to solicit more information from the participant. Probes will be used to solicit further understanding or clarity of participant's initial response. Questions in subsequent interviews will be based on participant's responses to these questions and queries I had during the transcription and coding processes.

1. Tell me about the reasons you chose to be trained in the FRIENDS program?
2. When did you complete your FRIENDS training? What were your thoughts about the program at the time? How did these thoughts factor into your decision to implement the program?
3. How many times have you implemented the program in schools?
4. What do you think about the modules? What are the challenges? Are there modules that are easier and more difficult to teach the children?
5. Tell me about the adjustments you have made to the program?
6. Tell me about the support you have from school staff and administration in regards to the FRIENDS program? How has this impacted your implementation efforts?

Appendix B: Introductory Letter

To whom it may concern,

My name is Natasha Bacchus and as well as being a District Elementary Behaviour Specialist and Provincial Trainer for the FRIENDS program, I am also a student working towards a doctorate in Educational Psychology from Walden University. I am writing to find potential participants for my study on Teacher implementation of a school based anxiety prevention program in BC. Specifically, I am looking for teachers who have taken the Child FRIENDS Teacher training program (Grade 4 and 5) and are currently, or have recently implemented the program in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms and have completed the FRIENDS teacher training. If you meet this criteria, and are willing to be interviewed about your experiences, please review the attachment and contact me to set up an interview time. I can be reached on my personal cell phone at (250) 981-0274 or by email, at natashia.bacchus@waldenu.edu.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Natashia Bacchus, BA, M.Ed, PhD (cand).