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Implementation Quality in Context:

A Case Study of Social and Emotional Learning at a Community School

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Evelyn Wang

2021

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Implementation Quality in Context:

A Case Study of Social and Emotional Learning at a Community School

by

Evelyn Wang

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Christina A. Christie, Chair

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has been shown to have positive impacts on student and school outcomes; attending to social-emotional competencies in students and staff leads to increased academic achievement and improved school climate. Additionally, the efficacy of SEL interventions has been directly linked to the quality of implementation. However, high-quality implementation of SEL interventions has been difficult to operationalize in terms of identifying essential intervention components and contextual factors that enhance implementation quality. In order to effectively implement SEL and achieve desired outcomes, practitioners require increased clarity on how to optimize the implementation quality of SEL interventions within their particular school contexts.

Using a single case study design, this study examined the implementation of an SEL intervention at a community school in order to determine which intervention

components and contextual factors were most effective in promoting high-quality implementation. Qualitative data from interviews, observations, documents, artifacts, and surveys were analyzed to generate a rich, in-depth narrative of the first two years of SEL implementation; special attention was paid to the perspectives and experiences of the school's implementation team. Through careful description and investigation of the implementation process and related contextual factors, this instrumental case study aims to refine the conceptual framework for evaluating the implementation quality of SEL interventions.

Findings indicated that even with some deviations from the intervention model, the community school achieved considerable success with SEL implementation. While the implementation process was hindered by several intervention components and contextual factors—primarily external stressors, limited resources, and limited structural supports—implementation quality was significantly enhanced by the intervention's support system, SEL-oriented school culture and climate, and efficacy of the implementation team. These findings contribute to the refinement of the conceptual framework for evaluating SEL implementation by identifying intervention components, contextual factors, and contextually appropriate adaptations with the greatest impacts on implementation quality. Findings from this study also have practical implications for pre-implementation strategies, support system components, and macro- and school-level policies related to SEL implementation; findings are relevant to practitioners in similar school settings who wish to maximize the implementation quality of future SEL interventions.

The dissertation of Evelyn Wang is approved.

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Karen Quartz

Kristen Lee Rohanna

Christina A. Christie, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

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It is no exaggeration to state that the challenges faced by students in the current time—a global pandemic, school closures, racial and political turmoil, natural disasters, and more—have been unprecedented in severity and scope. As educators, families, communities, and policymakers contend with an overwhelming wave of extant and emerging student needs, the damaging effects to students' academic learning and mental health since the start of the pandemic can already be seen (Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Margolius et al., 2020; Terada, 2020). While school closures and the transition to distance learning certainly affected all students, children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families and communities—already at greater risk for negative outcomes due to housing and food insecurity, chronic stress, and other conditions of poverty (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997)—have suffered most from the loss and disruption of school-based services, particularly mental health supports (Golberstein et al., 2020; Terada, 2020). It has never been more important for schools to actively attend to their students' mental health and social-emotional well-being, and as schools continue to re-open and undergo the complicated transition back to in-person instruction, social and emotional learning (SEL) supports have never been more essential to the school experience.

In its traditional school-based form, SEL has become increasingly popular over the last decade as a nonacademic intervention for addressing student needs and improving student outcomes (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). SEL is defined as "the process of acquiring core competencies to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive

relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations constructively" (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 406). The well-known SEL framework created by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020b) identifies five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Grounded in developmental research and theory, the SEL approach acknowledges that students' social-emotional and academic skills are interdependent; that many students enter school with inadequate social-emotional competencies; and that schools play a critical role in supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Increased support at the federal and state levels has also contributed to the growing implementation of SEL programs and practices as school-based, universal interventions (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states have been given more control in identifying nonacademic accountability metrics and indicators for school success (e.g., student engagement and school climate) and allocating federal funding for activities that promote safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments (e.g., discipline reform, anti-bullying initiatives, and positive behavioral interventions and supports) (CASEL, 2020a). As of March 2020, all 50 states in the country have adopted SEL standards or competencies for preschool, 18 states have adopted SEL standards or competencies for K-12 (compared to only one state in 2011), and 21 states have added SEL implementation resources and guidance to their official websites (CASEL, 2020a). In particular, the California Department of Education (2018) published a set of guiding principles for SEL implementation and affirmed that schools should commit to SEL as "not a 'nice to have' but a 'must have' to ensure student success in school, work, and community" (p. 2).

As SEL implementation has expanded across the country, an extensive body of research has provided strong evidence for SEL as an effective school-based strategy for promoting students' academic and nonacademic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Taylor et al., 2017). SEL interventions that significantly improved students' social-emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviors also had significantly positive effects on academic performance with improved test scores and grades (Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003). Students who participated in SEL programs had more positive social behaviors, better conflict resolution skills, fewer conduct problems (e.g., aggression and violence), less emotional distress, and lower drug use (Adalbjarnardottir, 1993; Brown et al., 2004; Farrell et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2011). At the classroom level, classroom management interventions were more effective when they incorporated SEL strategies (Korpershoek et al., 2016). While exposure to SEL in early childhood education is invaluable, research indicates that SEL can also be effective throughout students' primary and secondary education; importantly, the long-term benefits from SEL interventions were comparable regardless of students' race, socioeconomic background, or school location (Taylor et al., 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the multitude of studies on the effectiveness of SEL interventions, research on the implementation of SEL interventions has been slower to emerge (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jones et al., 2017). SEL implementation research belongs to the larger domain of implementation science, which is rooted in agricultural research and has since been applied to clinical, educational, and social science interventions (Albers & Pattuwage, 2017; Durlak, 2017). Implementation is broadly defined as "the intentional use of strategies to introduce or adapt evidence-

based interventions within real-world settings" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 208); as such, implementation research is concerned with "what a program consists of when it is delivered in a particular setting" (Durlak & DuPre, 2008, p. 329), including fidelity, dosage, and adaptation. While there is general agreement on the importance of assessing implementation data, Durlak and DuPre (2008) found that very few studies of mental health interventions documented implementation processes or conducted analyses of the relationship between implementation and program outcomes. Similarly, Durlak and colleagues (2011) found that almost half of the SEL studies they reviewed did not monitor implementation and thus were excluded from their meta-analysis; nonetheless, their review of intervention studies that did include implementation data confirmed that quality and fidelity of implementation were significantly and positively correlated with program outcomes. These findings echo other meta-analyses in concluding that high-quality implementation is a crucial element in the success of SEL interventions (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jones et al., 2017), yet there is insufficient research on what high-quality SEL implementation entails on a practical level. As a whole, researchers and practitioners "know very little about what is 'inside' SEL-focused interventions and programs—the specific skills, strategies, and programmatic features that likely drive those positive outcomes" (Jones et al., 2021, p. 5).

Clarity and detailed guidance on high-quality SEL implementation are especially vital for under-resourced schools seeking out evidence-based SEL interventions to effectively improve the social-emotional and academic outcomes of their high-needs students. With such a varied array of available SEL programs—many of which require payment for training, materials, and ongoing support—the ideal processes and conditions for successful implementation remain mostly unclear to practitioners. Low-quality or inconsistent implementation may in fact explain why some schools see

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positive results with SEL interventions and others do not, yet there is minimal evidence for the critical elements of high-quality implementation that ensure more consistently positive results for students and staff (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jones et al., 2017). In the same vein, the influence of multi-level contextual factors on the implementation quality of a particular setting's SEL intervention is often overlooked and left unspecified (Adelman & Taylor, 2003; Dusenbury et al., 2003; Wandersman et al., 2008). Such ambiguity about the SEL implementation process may lead practitioners to perpetuate a cycle of adopting and abandoning interventions that appear unsuccessful, rather than taking the time to adapt effective strategies to the specific context of their school setting (Rohanna, 2017). For educators and school districts with limited funds, staff capacity, and resources, evidence for the practicality and context of high-quality SEL implementation is just as essential as evidence for improving student outcomes. In order to address practitioner needs as well as limitations in the evidence base for SEL effectiveness, the research community has acknowledged that monitoring the practical elements of the implementation process and assessing the contextual factors of implementation quality should be fundamental components of all SEL studies (Durlak, 2017; Durlak et al., 2011; Humphrey, 2013; Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

The present study addresses these concerns through a case study of the implementation of a schoolwide SEL intervention at a community school, focusing on the first two years of implementation. Before describing the purpose of the study, however, it is important to specify what the study is not—i.e., it is *not* an effectiveness study of this particular SEL program. Due to several major contextual factors (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic) that disrupted the intended timeline for this study's data collection and the SEL implementation, it would be fair to assume that the community

school's roll-out of the SEL intervention was inordinately impacted and subsequently much more limited than the typical roll-out sequence conceived by the program developer. Additionally, research has shown that systemic schoolwide interventions may require three to five years to achieve high-quality implementation and desired outcomes (Rimm-Kauffman et al., 2007; Sugai & Horner, 2006); even without severe disruptions to the implementation timeline, attempting to empirically evaluate the effectiveness of this particular SEL program in promoting student and school outcomes would most likely have been premature at this stage.

Research Purpose and Questions

This purpose of this study was to examine the single-case phenomenon of the implementation of an externally developed SEL intervention within the complex system of a community school. In the fall of 2018, Keller-University Community School[1], a university-partnered community school located in an urban school district, launched a schoolwide initiative to implement the SELIS (Social and Emotional Learning In Schools)[2] program as a universal nonacademic support for its high-needs student population as well as its staff. Provided with intensive training and ongoing coaching from the program developer, the community school's Integrated Student Supports Committee was designated as the SELIS implementation team and tasked with implementing the SEL intervention.

This retrospective case study serves as an in-depth qualitative investigation of the intricacies of the implementation process during the first two years and provides

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[1] The name of the school has been changed to protect the confidentiality of study participants.
[2] The name of the SEL program has been changed to protect the confidentiality of the school and study participants.

rich description and understanding of the contextual factors involved—e.g., the specific assets and complicated needs of the school's students, staff, partners, and community; the ground-level perspectives and attitudes of the school staff who were designated the SELIS implementation team; and the social-emotional climate of a community school undergoing a massive transformation and unprecedented societal hardships during the implementation period. (The second year of implementation coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, school closure, and transition to distance learning beginning in March 2020; findings from participants' follow-up interviews, conducted after the end of Year 2, explicitly address SELIS implementation and SEL supports in the context of these events.) In particular, the present study attends to implementation quality—"the discrepancy between what is planned and what is actually delivered when an intervention is conducted" (Domitrovich et al., 2008, p. 7)— as the outcome of interest, with the specific purpose of understanding how the implementation process arrived at that particular outcome.

As such, the study was guided by two overarching research questions:

1. What was the implementation process during the first two years of the SELIS intervention at Keller-University Community School?

2. Which components and contextual factors significantly influenced the SELIS implementation process, and how did they influence the quality of implementation?

Researcher Positionality

Before proceeding to the review of the literature, it is important to acknowledge my positionality in this study and how my background brought me to this work. With my prior research and professional experience at a nonprofit social services agency—

and a keen interest in the intersection of mental health and academic outcomes in community settings—I came to Keller-University Community School (Keller) in the fall of 2017 as a Graduate Student Researcher (GSR). I learned that Keller had only recently partnered with the same large metropolitan university (hereafter referred to as the University) where I was a first-year doctoral student; I also learned that Keller's student population, predominantly Black and Latino, included a disproportionately high number of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, foster youth, and homeless youth who required a wide range of supports. I was excited for the opportunity to collaborate with school staff, University partners, and University researchers on mental health initiatives and research projects to support the community school and its students and families.

During my first year as a GSR (2017-2018 academic year), I dove headfirst into exploring Keller's existing system for student supports. With the goal of creating an organizational chart of the Student Support Team and a process map to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of the service referral process, I collaborated with another GSR to conduct exploratory interviews with eight members of the school's administration and counseling staff. Our findings indicated that the staff often felt overwhelmed in trying to meet the many complex needs of their students and encountered several barriers to efficiently tracking referrals and service provision. We shared these results at the school's final governance council meeting of the school year, leading to the establishment of the Integrated Student Supports (ISS) Committee to provide additional support to staff and address the barriers they identified. For the next three years, I served as a member of the ISS Committee, which was chaired by a school administrator and comprised of teachers, counselors, administrative staff, and

University partners with the shared goal of improving mental health supports and students' overall well-being at Keller.

In the 2018-2019 academic year, Keller-University Community School launched a collaborative effort with University-affiliated partners to implement the SELIS program as a schoolwide intervention to promote social-emotional competencies and improve school climate for both students and staff. As the designated SELIS implementation team, the ISS Committee was tasked with facilitating the implementation process. These developments presented me—as a GSR, an ISS Committee member, and de facto member of the SELIS implementation team—with the unique opportunity to both support the ISS Committee with the SELIS implementation (participant) and examine the implementation process from a researcher's perspective (observer).

While I certainly benefited from direct access to the research site and study participants, my interests as a researcher observing the implementation process were often complicated by my active participation in implementation activities and my investment in the success of Keller's SELIS implementation—and student supports overall—as an ISS Committee member. For example, the committee would sometimes ask for my input during planning meetings ("Evelyn, do you think we need more members?") or make use of my field notes to track their activities and goals ("Evelyn, you're taking notes, right?"). In these instances, it was important to be clear about my researcher goals (e.g., conducting formal observations of ISS Committee meetings) while also being helpful to the committee (e.g., serving as the unofficial recordkeeper). Additionally, while I might have been mostly perceived as an outsider due to my lack of a full-time staff position at Keller and my affiliation with the University, my familiarity with the community school and my perspectives as an insider developed significantly over the four years of my tenure as a GSR.

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In order to address my potential biases as a participant-observer and insider-outsider at Keller, as well as work through ethical dilemmas that sometimes emerged from my dual roles, I practiced reflexivity by writing in a research journal and discussing potential issues with my advisor, my GSR supervisor, and fellow student researchers (i.e., dialogic engagement) throughout the research process. I also relied on triangulation of data collected from multiple sources (i.e., interviews, observations, documents, artifacts, surveys, and historical data) and participant validation of my analyses (i.e., check-ins with ISS Committee members and other school staff) in order to ensure greater validity of my findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). These procedures will be detailed further in Chapter 3.

Study Significance and Implications

There can be no doubt that the high-quality implementation of an evidence-based schoolwide SEL intervention can have significantly positive impacts on students' socio-emotional and academic outcomes—the question lies in how exactly a successful SEL intervention should be operationalized and adapted to a school's particular context, especially in under-resourced schools dealing with challenging circumstances. By using a research methodology that relies on rich qualitative data, privileges the perspectives and experiences of the SELIS implementation team (i.e., the ISS Committee), and focuses on the implementation process and contextual factors that significantly influence implementation quality, this retrospective case study provides invaluable insights on effective components of SEL implementation and addresses current gaps in the literature regarding high-quality implementation of SEL interventions. In particular, this study aims to refine the conceptualization and operationalization of SEL implementation theory by identifying the components and

contextual factors essential to high-quality SEL implementation at Keller-University Community School and schools with similar settings.

Findings from this study will be especially relevant to practitioners in similar school settings who wish to provide high-quality social-emotional supports to their students and staff but may feel overwhelmed by the vast and varied selection of SEL interventions and by the limited guidance on actual implementation processes. Along with de-mystifying what high-quality SEL implementation actually entails on the ground level, this study will provide practitioners with a greater understanding of the practical considerations and challenges of rolling out a schoolwide SEL intervention. Findings from this study will also have broader implications for policy decisions at district, state, and federal levels regarding the allocation of funding and resources for school-based SEL interventions. If SEL interventions are truly a "must have" for improving students' social-emotional and academic development, they must have the appropriate investment and support system to ensure high-quality implementation and desired outcomes.

As SEL interventions continue to proliferate in schools across the country, educators, researchers, and policymakers must make a stronger commitment to monitoring and evaluating the impact of these interventions on student and school outcomes. The effectiveness of SEL interventions as mental health supports will become even more high-stakes as schools continue to re-open and begin to address students' social-emotional needs due to pandemic-related traumas (Margolius et al., 2020; Terada, 2020). It is clear from the literature that documentation of the implementation process and measurement of implementation quality must be prioritized in SEL studies in order to deepen understanding of SEL interventions, ensure accountability for educators and SEL developers, and increase effectiveness in

improving social-emotional and academic outcomes for students and schools. With a contextually informed framework for assessing implementation components and implementation quality, this study seeks to strengthen the evidence base on high-quality SEL interventions with an in-depth and careful examination of an SEL implementation at a community school.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

There are several theoretical frameworks and perspectives in the literature that help to situate the present study on implementation quality of a social and emotional learning intervention at a community school. Before delving into the literature on SEL, it is important to first develop a greater understanding of the community school model (also known as integrated student supports) as the setting in which schoolwide SEL interventions are often implemented. I then provide an overview of SEL as a framework for improving social-emotional competencies and outcomes in students and schools, followed by a deeper exploration of implementation quality as a determinant of success for SEL interventions. The section on implementation quality also includes a brief description of the theoretical framework that informs the implementation process of the SELIS program as intended by its developer. Finally, I conclude with an explanation of the conceptual framework for the present study.

The chapter is organized thus: (1) an overview of the literature on community schools and integrated student supports, (2) an overview of the literature on social and emotional learning, (3) an overview of the literature on evaluating the implementation quality of SEL interventions, and (4) an explanation of the conceptual framework that guided the present study.

Community Schools and Integrated Student Supports

In recent years, the community school movement has quickly gained momentum and given rise to the establishment of thousands of community schools across the country. As a place-based school improvement strategy, community schools

partner with families, community agencies, and local government to provide all students with academic supports, health and social services, enrichment activities, and community engagement opportunities (Coalition for Community Schools, 2017). While the number of community schools has increased dramatically in the last decade, the concept of community schools is rooted in century-old principles of American schooling, particularly Horace Mann's vision of education as the great equalizer in society and John Dewey's philosophy of democratic, community-centered education (Richardson, 2009; Weiss & Reville, 2019). The modern community school model—also referred to as integrated student supports (ISS)[3]—is grounded in well-established child development theories and frameworks such as the "whole child" approach (i.e., a child's developmental outcomes should be promoted across cognitive, behavioral, social-emotional, and health domains) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model (i.e., a child's developmental outcomes are concurrently influenced by personal, family, community, institutional, and societal factors) (Biag & Castrechini, 2016; Richardson, 2009). By serving as a centralized "hub" for its neighborhood (Dryfoos, 2008), a community school is well-positioned to develop strategic partnerships and provide integrated supports that comprehensively address students' academic and nonacademic needs; in this way, community schools "embrace the whole child" (Coalition for Community Schools, 2017, p. 1).

Since the 2015 reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act—retitled the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—states have received increased federal funding to specifically implement community schools as an intervention for

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[3] The education field is somewhat divided on whether to conceptualize "community schools" and "integrated student supports" as distinct entities; some consider the terms to be mostly interchangeable (Moore et al., 2017) while others consider ISS to be one of the key pillars of community schools (Oakes et al., 2017). For the purposes of this study, community schools are conceptualized as a vehicle for providing integrated student supports (Weiss & Reville, 2019).

improving student outcomes and addressing inequities in school resources (Oakes et al., 2017). State and local policymakers across the country have incorporated community schools into their ESSA plans, with many community school projects launched in close partnership with local government, universities, and nonprofit agencies (Oakes et al., 2017). The Coalition for Community Schools, which has played a large role in advocating for community schools and related policies, counts more than 7,500 community schools in more than 100 regions across the country (2017). Community school initiatives may operate their own networks of schools (e.g., Elev8 [McClanahan & Piccinino, 2016]) or partner with school districts to provide supports for low-performing schools (e.g., City Connects [City Connects, 2016] and Communities in Schools [Somers & Haider, 2017]). More broadly, ESSA has allowed schools and school districts to incorporate ISS into federally funded programs that promote students' academic achievement (Title I) and health and safety (Title VI); ISS initiatives now exist in all 50 states (Moore et al., 2017).

As the implementation of community schools has expanded nationwide, the evidence base for the effectiveness of community schools in improving student outcomes has also grown substantially (Moore et al., 2017; Oakes et al., 2017; Richardson, 2009; Weiss & Reville, 2019). Tellingly, the Coalition of Community Schools has shifted from indicating that "evidence [for the community school strategy] is mounting" (2009, p. 4) to stating decisively that "community schools are an evidence-based strategy" (2017, p. 1). Community school initiatives have increasingly commissioned external evaluators or conducted internal evaluations to assess their impact on the students they serve (City Connects, 2016; McClanahan & Piccinino, 2016; Somers & Haider, 2017). While the majority of community school and ISS evaluations have relied on quasi-experimental designs, researchers have made a concerted effort to

conduct more rigorous experimental studies (Moore et al., 2017; Oakes et al., 2017).

Overall the findings demonstrate that community schools—and ISS more broadly—

have generally positive effects on students' academic and nonacademic outcomes.

Based on limited evidence of causal relationships, however, community schools are

frequently determined to be a "promising" but not yet proven approach (McClanahan &

Piccinino, 2016; Moore et al., 2017; Oakes et al., 2017; Somers & Haider, 2017; Weiss &

Reville, 2019).

       With increasing support and demand from educators, communities, and

policymakers, community schools are one of the fastest-growing school improvement

strategies in the nation (Coalition for Community Schools, 2017), yet the field is still in

need of definitive evidence that confirms their effectiveness (Weiss & Reville, 2019). In

particular, the community school evidence base suffers from insufficient

understanding of implementation. Despite general acknowledgement that community

schools are a complex, multifaceted strategy and that quality of implementation is a

key factor in producing positive outcomes, relatively few evaluations include research

questions about implementation, let alone prioritize it as the main variable (Moore et

al., 2017; Oakes et al., 2017; Weiss & Reville, 2019). The evidence base is therefore

missing important insights on the specific mechanisms that drive successful

community schools (Moore et al., 2017)—for example, fidelity of implementation,

students' exposure to supports (dosage), use of integrated data systems to track

student supports, and cost of required resources. As with successful implementation

of SEL interventions, the "specific, concrete elements" that comprise high-quality and

effective implementation of community school and ISS initiatives remain unclear

(Moore et al., 2017, p. 6). The community school literature, with limited studies that

include implementation variables or outcomes in their analyses, has yet to adequately address this concern.

In order to increase understanding of community school implementation as a contributing factor to student outcomes, the field should invest in implementation studies with different methodological approaches. It is not enough to detect positive outcomes for students; community school studies must also identify the specific conditions under which these positive outcomes were produced. Implementation studies can provide a deeper understanding of critical factors such as quality and fidelity of implementation, students' exposure and responsiveness to supports, and school infrastructures for tracking service provision and student outcomes. For educators and policymakers concerned with practicality and sustainability, it is imperative to recognize which elements of a high-quality community school model are indispensable and which elements are adaptable, how resource levels and contextual factors may influence implementation and effectiveness, and which procedures and stakeholders are required to establish a strong foundation for high-quality implementation and effective supports.

Additionally, in order to competently address the complexity and heterogeneity of community schools, studies should use and combine different methodological approaches whenever appropriate. In conjunction with experimental and quasi-experimental studies, qualitative research can provide deeper insights into multiple variables of community school operations and their effects on implementation quality and student- and school-level outcomes. By prioritizing the addition of in-depth qualitative implementation studies to the evidence base, researchers, educators, communities, and policymakers will benefit from a greater understanding of the effectiveness of community school and ISS initiatives.

Social and Emotional Learning

As previously discussed, social and emotional learning (SEL) has been well-established as an effective intervention for promoting students' academic and nonacademic outcomes, and an increasing number of schools are integrating SEL programs and practices on a schoolwide and classroom-level basis (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jones et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2017). CASEL—a prominent advocacy organization that seeks to advance SEL-related research, practice, and policy across the country—has identified SEL as a framework for promoting students' social-emotional competencies, addressing students' needs, and aligning school and community supports (CASEL, n.d.). The CASEL SEL Framework (Figure 1) information guide defines the five core social-emotional competencies as:

1. Self-awareness ("the abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts"),

2. Self-management ("the abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations"),

3. Social awareness ("the abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts"),

4. Relationship skills ("the abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups"), and

5. Responsible decision-making ("the abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations") (CASEL, 2020b).
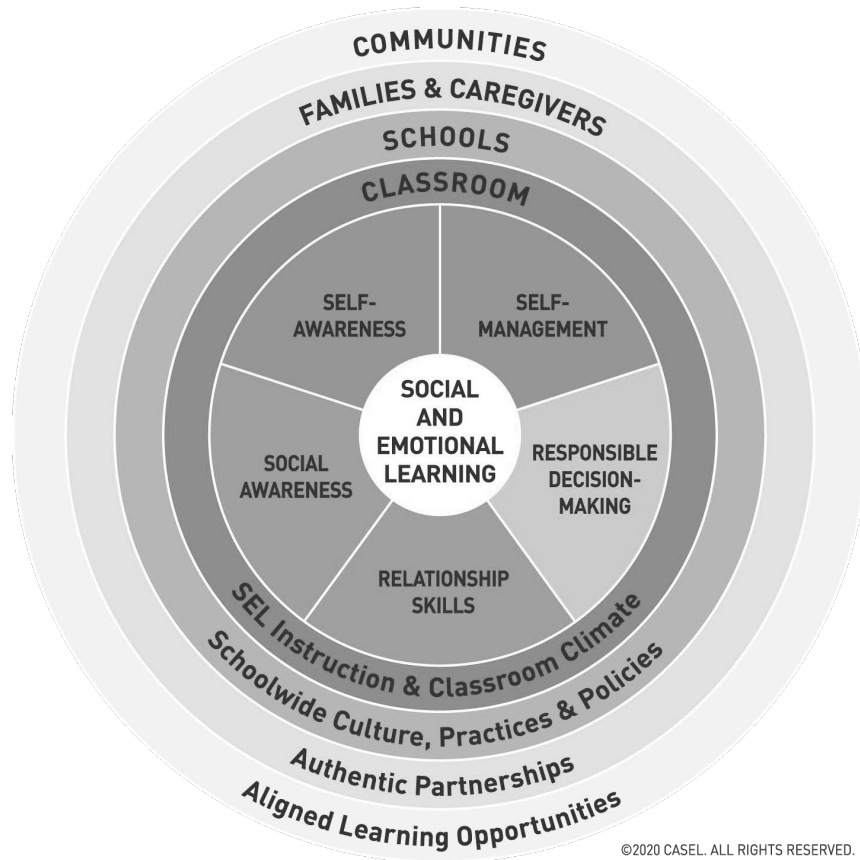
Figure 1. CASEL SEL Framework (CASEL, 2020b)

Additionally, the framework identifies the mechanisms and structures that must come together to support students' social-emotional competencies and development: SEL instruction and classroom climate; schoolwide culture, practices, and policies; authentic partnerships with families and caregivers; and aligned learning opportunities within communities (CASEL, 2020b). In this way, the framework recognizes that SEL is not just within the purview of a child's teacher in the classroom; it requires concurrent participation and support across multiple systems of institutional, familial, and community influences within the child's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

According to CASEL and other SEL advocates, research has clearly demonstrated that SEL is integral to promoting student outcomes and should be embedded in all

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PreK-12 schools; an abundance of effectiveness studies have provided strong evidence for the positive impacts of SEL interventions on students (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Taylor et al., 2017). In their seminal large-scale meta-analysis of 213 studies, Durlak and colleagues (2011) found that students who received SEL scored an average of 11 percentile points higher on standardized academic tests than students who did not receive SEL. At the classroom level, a meta-analysis found that classroom management interventions were more effective when they incorporated SEL strategies (Korpershoek et al., 2016). Students who participated in SEL programs also had better conflict resolution skills, fewer conduct problems (i.e., aggression and violence), less emotional distress, and lower drug use (Adalbjarnardottir, 1993; Brown et al., 2004; Farrell et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2011). Furthermore, research indicates that SEL can be effective throughout students' primary and secondary education. A meta-analysis of 82 SEL interventions with K-12 students found that six months to 18 years later, students with exposure to SEL did better than their control-group peers on social-emotional and academic indicators; importantly, the benefits from SEL interventions were comparable regardless of students' race, socioeconomic background, or school location (Taylor et al., 2017). As for the cost-effectiveness of SEL, a review of six SEL interventions showed an average benefit-to-cost ratio of 11 to 1 (Belfield et al., 2015); i.e., for every dollar invested in SEL interventions, there is an average return of $11 in students' earnings and socioeconomic gains later in life.

Evaluating the Implementation Quality of SEL Interventions

Along with effectiveness studies on SEL interventions, studies that evaluate SEL implementation have become more prevalent in recent years (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jones et al., 2017). Durlak (2017) defines implementation as "what a

program looks like in reality rather than what a program is conceived to be in theory"
(p. 2); accordingly, implementation research attends to the "disconnect" between
theory and practice, which can often yield substantial differences. The implementation
of school-based SEL interventions generally consists of two complementary strategies:
(1) instructional programming that develops students' social-emotional competencies
and (2) classroom- and school-level practices that foster supportive learning
environments (Greenberg et al., 2003). Recognizing that implementation quality can
have significant impacts on program outcomes (Durlak & DuPre, 2008), Durlak and
colleagues (2011) evaluated three key variables: intervention format (class by teacher,
class by non-school personnel, or multicomponent programs); use of recommended
procedures for developing SEL skills (sequenced training approach, active forms of
learning, focused time on each skill, and explicit learning goals [SAFE]); and adequate
program implementation (based on reported implementation problems). Findings
showed that the greatest effects on student outcomes came from teacher-led
classroom-based programs, programs that used all four SAFE procedures, and
programs without any reported implementation problems (Durlak et al., 2011). In the
same vein, Jones and Bouffard's (2012) review of the literature found that teachers
who effectively integrated SEL programs into daily classroom practices had students
with more positive outcomes (e.g., Brown et al., 2004). Alternatively, other research has
shown that students participating in poorly implemented interventions demonstrate
little or no improvement in outcomes (Banerjee, 2010; Battistich et al., 2000; Dane &
Schneider, 1998).

Although their results confirmed the positive impact of high-quality
implementation on program outcomes, Durlak and colleagues (2011) noted that 43% of
the SEL studies they reviewed did not monitor implementation in any way and thus

were excluded from their analysis; of the studies that were included, many did not provide information on the different types of implementation problems that occurred or the conditions in place—i.e., organizational and ecological factors (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Greenberg et al., 2003)—that may have affected implementation and program outcomes. Without these details, it would be nearly impossible to identify which components or contextual factors of the SEL interventions were most effective in enhancing or impeding implementation quality, thus obscuring the key mechanisms for success or failure and limiting the transferability of these programs to other settings (Humphrey, 2013).

Theoretical Framework for SELIS Implementation

In considering the implementation of the SELIS program in particular, it is important to acknowledge the theoretical framework that guides the intended implementation process of the SELIS program. While SELIS's programmatic features should be assessed as variables of the intervention model and support system model (Domitrovich et al., 2008), understanding the outcomes of its implementation process first requires an understanding of what the program was conceived to be in theory (Durlak, 2017). In particular, SELIS employs the train-the-trainer model—commonly used in situations where demand for training exceeds trainer capacity—in order to disseminate program knowledge and materials. After a small team of school staff participate in the initial training with the SELIS Center[4], they are designated the SELIS implementation team and tasked with facilitating training with general school staff[5] during the first year of implementation. As conceptualized by the developer, staff

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[4] The SELIS Center offers a paid package subscription for initial staff training and up to two years of remote coaching and online resources.
[5] I use "general school staff" or "general staff" to encompass any staff person (administrators, teachers, support staff, etc.) who is not a member of the SELIS implementation team.

training and professional development should be prioritized as a critical first step in the implementation process; SELIS should be implemented with the school's adult stakeholders for at least one academic year before being implemented with students. This rationale stems from evidence suggesting that staff who first enhance their own social-emotional skills and belief in SEL are more effective in facilitating SELIS implementation, modeling social-emotional skills, and supporting social-emotional skills in their students (Greenberg et al., 2017; Humphrey, 2013; Jones & Kahn, 2017).

During the second year of implementation, the general school staff—led and supported by the school's implementation team—introduces SELIS to their students and begins to embed SELIS concepts and activities in classroom and schoolwide practices. The implementation team receives ongoing coaching and resources from the SELIS Center and, in turn, provides ongoing coaching and resources to the rest of the school staff. As conceived by the developer, the SELIS program addresses both the intervention and support system components of the implementation model (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Rooted in an evidence-based theory of change, high-quality implementation of the SELIS program is intended and expected to increase social-emotional competencies in students and staff, improve interpersonal relationships and school climate, and develop SEL pedagogy and school practices.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

In order to address the discrepancies in the literature regarding the evaluation of SEL implementation quality, the present study was guided by the conceptual framework created by Domitrovich and colleagues (2008), which provides a multi-level ecological model for considering contextual factors that may directly or indirectly affect the implementation quality of school-based interventions. This model is

consistent with social-ecological frameworks (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; CASEL, 2020b) and accounts for macro-level factors (e.g., policies and financing, university and community partnerships), school-level factors (e.g., personnel expertise, administrative leadership, and school culture), and individual-level factors (e.g., professional characteristics, intervention perceptions and attitudes); the inclusion of these factors is based on theory and empirical research (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Centrally positioned as the outcome of interest, implementation quality is defined as "the discrepancy between what is planned and what is actually delivered when an intervention is conducted" (p. 7) and comprised of two distinct yet interrelated components—the intervention and the corresponding support system (Domitrovich et al., 2008). An intervention is a strategy in which a causal mechanism is linked to intended outcomes (Chen, 1990), while the support system provides the infrastructure and establishes the context for the intervention delivery (Greenberg et al., 2005); the core elements, standardization, and delivery model for both the intervention and its support system should be specified and evaluated to ensure high-quality implementation (Greenberg et al., 2005). In applying this conceptual framework to school-based SEL interventions in particular, researchers can better understand the effects of various intervention components and implementation factors that may enhance or impede effective implementation (Durlak, 2017).

As with community school implementation studies, the SEL field needs to prioritize research that can identify which elements of high-quality interventions are indispensable and which are adaptable, how resource levels and contextual factors may influence implementation quality and intervention effectiveness, and which procedures and stakeholders are required to establish a strong foundation for high-quality implementation. Similarly, because SEL interventions are also subject to the

complexity and heterogeneity of school settings, qualitative research methods should be utilized in SEL studies to properly address these practical concerns and capture a more detailed and accurate account of each school's implementation process and contextual factors. While experimental and quasi-experimental studies can provide empirical evidence for the effectiveness of SEL interventions in improving student and school outcomes, qualitative implementation studies can provide deeper insights into multiple variables of the implementation process and their effects on implementation quality, ultimately strengthening the evidence base and supporting the work of SEL practitioners and policymakers.

Informed by these SEL-oriented theoretical frameworks and guided by the conceptual framework for implementation quality (Domitrovich et al., 2008), the present study uses qualitative case study methods to provide a methodical and in-depth investigation of the outcome of interest (i.e., the implementation quality of an SEL intervention at a community school), with a specific focus on the effects of intervention components and contextual factors. Situated in community school, SEL, and implementation literature, the study acknowledges that: (1) high-quality community schools provide a wide range of school- and community-based supports that address the needs of "the whole child" and improve student and school outcomes, (2) school-based SEL interventions are essential supports for promoting students' social-emotional and academic outcomes, and (3) high-quality implementation is integral to the success of any SEL intervention. Building on these frameworks and perspectives, the study addresses the literature's need for implementation studies that provide clarity on which intervention components and contextual factors have the greatest influence on implementation quality and ultimately yield the best outcomes for students and schools (Durlak et al., 2011; Durlak, 2017; Jones et al., 2021). The

present study aims to contribute to the literature by addressing these key questions with qualitative research methods focused primarily on evaluating implementation quality in school-based SEL interventions.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter presents the research methods and analyses used in the present study to investigate the implementation quality of an SEL intervention at a community school. I begin with an explanation of the study design, provide an overview of the research setting and participants, and conclude with a description of data collection and analytic procedures. As previously discussed (Chapter 1), the present study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What was the implementation process during the first two years of the SELIS intervention at Keller-University Community School?

2. Which components and contextual factors significantly influenced the SELIS implementation process, and how did they influence the quality of implementation?

Study Design

In order to address the research questions, I employed case study methodology through which I collected qualitative and quantitative evidence of the SELIS implementation process—with a particular focus on the qualitative experiences and perspectives of the ISS Committee as the SELIS implementation team—and the macro-, school-, and individual-level contextual factors that influenced the implementation process and implementation quality. (It bears repeating that this study was not a program evaluation and not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the SELIS program; the case study was concerned with process rather than outcome [Merriam, 1998].) Additionally, I used a selection of extant data sources to develop an in-depth

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understanding and description of the school and community context for the SELIS implementation. Data analysis was initially guided by a deductive approach, using a priori constructs and theories synthesized by an implementation quality framework (Domitrovich et al., 2008), but also relied on an inductive approach to allow for emerging themes and increase validity of findings.

Case Study Design

The present study utilized the case study methodology with primarily qualitative data sources of interviews, observations, documents, artifacts, and historical data (Yin, 1994). (Some quantitative survey data was also collected to triangulate with qualitative data.) Qualitative methods have been identified as an integral component of implementation research; in addressing the hows and whys of implementation with rigor and efficiency, they serve as invaluable tools for understanding context and generating insights that support practice and problem-solving (Fetters et al., 2013; Hamilton & Finley, 2019). Similarly, case study research facilitates detailed contextual analysis of events and phenomena and context-dependent understanding of complex issues and relationships through interviews and observations (Dooley, 2002; Merriam, 2009).

Yin (1994) defines case study research as "scholarly inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 33). Bounded by place and time, a case describes a phenomenon and includes a setting, the individuals involved, the events, the problems, and the conflicts (Creswell, 2013; Dooley, 2002). Case studies are categorized as instrumental when they are intended to provide insights and address theoretical propositions about a particular issue (Stake, 2000); in particular, case studies (single or multiple) can be

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used for theory-building by confirming or disconfirming an already conceptualized and operationalized theory (Dooley, 2002). As such, I employed a single-case design in which the phenomenon of interest was the implementation of an SEL intervention (SELIS) at Keller-University Community School; the unit of analysis was the community school (with special attention to the ISS Committee); and the context of the case included macro-, school-, and individual-level factors related to the phenomenon. This instrumental case study provided a unique opportunity to investigate a phenomenon within its real-life context and gain a deeper theoretical understanding of the contextual factors that affect the implementation quality of SEL interventions.

Using a multiple-method case study design, I relied on several qualitative data sources (i.e., interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts) and quantitative data sources (i.e., surveys) to allow for more effective data triangulation and validation (Dooley, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1986; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The use of multiple methods and data sources was especially important for this study; in consideration of my dual roles as both participant (ISS Committee member) and observer (study researcher), it was critical to attend to any potential biases or limitations that may stem from my positionality and weaken the validity of my findings. In addition to verifying findings from interviews and observations that I conducted with participants, the use of documents, artifacts, and surveys allowed for the documentation and examination of implementation processes that I may have been unable to capture in person. Similarly, the inclusion of historical data (e.g., media publications about the university partnership, staff and student surveys administered the year before the study began) contributed to a stronger body of evidence on the contextual factors of the SELIS implementation.

Finally, this case study design was used as a method for theory building, in which case studies can be used to refine the conceptualization or operationalization of theoretical frameworks and confirm existing knowledge from previous research (Dooley, 2002; Yin, 1994). As an in-depth investigation of the implementation of an SEL intervention (SELIS) at a community school, this case study and its findings are intended to refine current theories on SEL interventions, implementation processes, and the measurement of implementation quality. While case study methodology is not intended to generate findings for exact replication, this study aims to contribute to theoretical generalization (Yin, 2009) by confirming or disconfirming which intervention components and contextual factors are essential to high-quality SEL implementation in real-life settings.

Study Setting and Participants

The study setting and participants were selected through purposive sampling for their direct experiences with and knowledge of the case study's phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016); purposive sampling is a widely used technique in qualitative research to identify and select "information-rich" cases for investigation (Patton, 2002).

Study Setting

Keller-University Community School was uniquely suited as a research site as it embarked on the implementation of a schoolwide SEL program with its students and staff. Located in a large urban city and school district, Keller serves a high-needs student population from a socioeconomically disadvantaged community. The student population is predominantly Black and Latino and includes disproportionately high numbers of foster youth, homeless youth, and students with disabilities. Before being

reimagined as a university-partnered community school, Keller was one of the district's lowest performing schools and one of many urban schools facing closure. As competing charter schools proliferated in the neighborhood in the early 2000s, Keller's enrollment dropped from its highest point of approximately 1,800 students to its lowest point of just over 300 students.

Beginning in the 2016-2017 academic year, the partnership between Keller and the University has sought to bring university faculty, students, and resources to the community school. The partnership between Keller and the University also endeavors to address socioeconomic and academic inequities by providing high-quality academic and nonacademic supports to students of color from lower-income families. As a subscription-based SEL intervention funded by the Community Services Center (a University-affiliated center), SELIS is one such support made possible by the partnership. However, high-quality implementation of an SEL intervention requires more than financial investment. In order to effectively operationalize its SEL supports and better serve its high-needs student population, Keller-University Community School and its stakeholders require a deeper understanding of the practical considerations involved with implementing SELIS, especially as informed by the experiences and perspectives of school staff who had the highest engagement with the implementation process.

Study Participants

While this case study was concerned with Keller-University Community School as a whole (e.g., macro- and school-level characteristics), I sought to privilege the voices and experiences of the key practitioners (ISS Committee members) who were most hands-on and engaged with the SELIS implementation process. This focus aligns with the understanding that researchers who wish to learn about an intervention's

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inner workings should attend to practitioners who interact with it on a daily basis (Merriam, 2009); indeed, "practitioners have developed good ideas and good programs largely on their own, and it is important that we identify when this has occurred and learn from them" (Durlak, 2017, p. 9). As such, there were ten primary study participants who served as members of the school's ISS Committee and became de facto members of the SELIS implementation team. The ISS Committee included an administrator (who became the committee chair), teachers, administrative staff, counselors, and university partners and researchers; they had varying professional backgrounds, familiarity with mental health and SEL interventions, and working tenures at Keller-University Community School. As a fellow ISS Committee member and a GSR from the University, I had direct access to SELIS implementation activities and Keller and University staff who were involved with the SELIS implementation.

Eligible participants were recruited based on their voluntary participation in the ISS Committee during the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years. Participants were recruited and consented as a group during one of the first ISS Committee meetings (fall of 2018), or individually whenever new members would join the committee throughout the two-year implementation period. (There were three participants who left their positions at the school during the implementation period, as well as staff who left the committee but remained at the school. These changes were minimally disruptive to data collection; I was able to conduct interviews and observations with participants even after they had left the school and/or were no longer part of the committee.) Participants were invited to participate in one-on-one interviews and observations in group settings (e.g., staff professional development [PD] activities); participation in the study lasted approximately two academic years (2018-2019 to 2019-2020), with an additional follow-up interview for some participants in the spring

of 2021. Participants could choose at any time to opt out of the study or any of its research activities.

Table 1. Summary of Participant Data

Participant	Position at School	ISS Committee	Interviews	Observations	Documents & Artifacts
Ms. Williams	Administrator	X	X	X	X
Mr. Miller	Coordinator	X	X	X	X
Ms. Campbell	Teacher	X	X	X	X
Ms. Bailey	Teacher	X	X	X	X
Ms. Green	Teacher	X	X	X	X
Ms. Thompson	Teacher	X		X	X
Mr. Davis	Counselor	X	X	X	X
Ms. Gutierrez	Counselor	X	X	X	X
Ms. Coleman	Counselor	X		X	X
Ms. Lee	Univ. Liaison	X		X	X

Data Collection and Analytic Procedures

Data Collection

Data collection occurred across four time points (Table 2): baseline (prior to the start of implementation), Year 1 of implementation, Year 2 of implementation, and follow-up (after the completion of Year 2 of implementation).

Baseline data included historical data from primary and secondary data sources on the school and community contexts; Keller- and district-administered staff and student surveys (Spring 2018); district materials on student support protocols for the school (documents); and researcher-generated notes and calendar.

Year 1 data included semi-structured pre-implementation interviews with 3 ISS Committee members (1 teacher, 1 counselor, and 1 administrator); observations of 6 ISS Committee monthly meetings, 1 SELIS Center training, and 2 SELIS-related staff

PDs; materials from SELIS Center training, ISS Committee and school meetings, and

staff PDs (documents); SELIS-related items and products generated by staff or students

(artifacts); and researcher-generated notes, calendar, and journal.

Table 2. Data Collection Timeline and Sources

Baseline AY 2017-2018	Year 1* AY 2018-2019	Year 2[†] AY 2019-2020	Follow-up AY 2020-2021
Data collection prior to SELIS Center training and Year 1 of SELIS implementation • **Historical Data**: Primary and secondary data on school and community context; Keller- and district-administered staff and student surveys (Spring 2018) • **Documents**: District materials on student support protocols • **Researcher Data**: Notes and calendar	Data collection for Year 1 of SELIS implementation • **Interviews**: 3 ISS Committee members • **Observations**: 1 SELIS Center training, 6 ISS Committee meetings, and 2 staff PDs on SELIS • **Documents**: Materials from SELIS Center training, ISS Committee and school meetings, and staff PDs • **Artifacts**: SELIS-related items and products (photos) • **Researcher Data**: Notes, calendar, and journal	Data collection for Year 2 of SELIS implementation • **Interviews**: 2 ISS Committee members • **Observations**: 7 ISS Committee meetings, 2 staff PDs on SELIS, and 3 SELIS-related student activities • **Documents**: Materials from ISS Committee and school meetings, staff PDs, and student activities • **Artifacts**: SELIS-related items and products (photos) • **Surveys**: Mid-year staff survey • **Researcher Data**: Notes, calendar, and journal	Data collection after Year 2 of SELIS implementation • **Interviews**: 6 ISS Committee members • **Documents**: SELIS Support Team newsletters; Keller and SELIS Center's COVID-19 resources • **Artifacts**: Keller internal staff website; Keller external website; Keller YouTube channel • **Researcher Data**: Notes, calendar, and journal

*Year 1 of implementation coincided with the local teachers' strike.
[†]Year 2 of implementation coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and school closure in March 2020.

Year 2 data included informal mid-year interviews with 2 ISS Committee

members (1 teacher and 1 administrator); observations of 7 ISS Committee monthly

meetings, 2 SELIS-related staff PDs, and 3 SELIS-related activities with students;

materials from ISS Committee and school meetings, staff PDs, and student activities

(documents); SELIS-related items and products generated by staff or students (artifacts); a mid-year staff survey administered by the ISS Committee; and researcher-generated notes, calendar, and journal.

Follow-up data included semi-structured follow-up interviews with 6 ISS Committee members (3 teachers, 1 counselor, 1 administrative coordinator, and 1 administrator); SELIS Support Team newsletters, SELIS Center COVID-19 resources, and Keller COVID-19 resources (documents); Keller's internal staff website, external website, and YouTube channel (artifacts); and researcher-generated notes, calendar, and journal.

A note about follow-up data: In the fall of 2019, the ISS Committee chair and I discussed the possibility of conducting interviews or administering surveys with teachers who were not members of the ISS Committee but had participated in Year 2 of SELIS implementation. The interviews or surveys would have occurred after the end of the school year and would have provided these teachers with the opportunity to share their perspectives and experiences of implementing SELIS with their students. With the school closure in March 2020, these plans for follow-up data collection were paused out of consideration for teachers as they navigated the challenging transition to distance learning. Nonetheless, the experiences and perspectives of non-ISS teachers are worth examining and could be the focus of future research on the SELIS implementation at Keller.

Interviews

Interview instruments included baseline and follow-up interview protocols guided by the study's research questions (see Appendices A and B), an audio recording device, and a computer to transcribe and code interviews for analysis. Interview data (along with observation, document, artifact, and survey data) were de-identified

promptly after collection and stored as encrypted files. Recordings of interviews (audio and video files) were de-identified in labeling, transcribed immediately, and deleted. Participant data were stored in a secure University-provided server with encryption and restricted access.

Using Seidman's (2013) methods of qualitative inquiry, interviews were guided by semi-structured protocols with open-ended items about the SELIS implementation process and relevant contextual factors; this technique allowed for clarifying questions or follow-up questions that elicited more in-depth responses or explored emergent topics. Interview protocols were revised for follow-up interviews in order to include items about the school closure and transition to distance learning due to COVID-19. Mid-year interviews were informal, brief, and consisted of one main item: "What has been your experience so far with the SELIS implementation?"

Guided by the research questions, interviews with ISS Committee members focused on their experiences and perspectives of the SELIS implementation process at baseline, mid-year, or follow-up time points. Interviews at each time point asked participants to describe and make meaning of particularly significant or vivid incidents that illustrated their experiences and perspectives of the SELIS implementation process. Baseline interviews (3 participants) were primarily focused on the following areas of SELIS implementation: pre-implementation understandings of SEL and integrated supports, pre-implementation SELIS training and support, pre-implementation preparations made by the school, and anticipated challenges and potential strategies for addressing these challenges. Mid-year (2 participants) and follow-up interviews (6 participants) were primarily focused on the following areas of SELIS implementation: key components and events of the implementation process (Year 1 and Year 2); the success or failure of implementation processes and goals;

implementation challenges and strategies for addressing them; and macro-, school-, and individual-level contextual factors that had meaningful impacts on the quality of implementation. In total, there were 11 interviews conducted between the fall of 2018 and spring of 2021.

Baseline and mid-year interviews were conducted in private one-on-one settings (e.g., administrator's office, unoccupied classroom, or off-site location near the school), separate from other community school staff and students and outside of school hours. Follow-up interviews were conducted remotely via the internet (online video chats) in private one-on-one settings. (Remote data collection for follow-up interviews was necessitated by the school closure and transition to distance learning due to COVID-19.) Interviews lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and were entirely dependent on the availability and willingness of participants.

Observations

Observation instruments included a general observation protocol that was guided by key components of the research questions but also able to accommodate unstructured observations (see Appendix C). I also kept field notes that served as a running record of participant discussions, interactions, and activities as they happened (i.e., in "real time").

ISS Committee Monthly Meetings. Participants were required by school administration to attend monthly ISS Committee meetings as part of staff professional development; at each of these meetings, I participated in ISS Committee discussions and activities, took detailed field notes, and collected meeting minutes and materials for document analysis. A few of the committee meetings were canceled due to external circumstances (e.g., emergency faculty meeting). However, the committee also scheduled a few additional working meetings in between the regularly scheduled

monthly meetings. Observations of ISS Committee meetings lasted approximately 60 minutes, or however long the committee decided to meet.

SELIS Staff PDs and Retreats. With approval from school administration, the ISS Committee was able to reserve regularly scheduled staff PDs to facilitate SELIS trainings with the general school staff. There were four SELIS-related staff PDs during the implementation period; each PD lasted approximately 90 minutes. Additionally, Year 1 and Year 2 of implementation each had one full-day staff retreat for SELIS training. I assisted the ISS Committee with planning the trainings but did not participate in facilitating them, therefore I was able to conduct observations of the ISS Committee and general school staff during these PDs and retreats.

SELIS Center Training. As an ISS Committee member, I was invited to attend the initial training provided by the SELIS Center in February 2019, along with several ISS Committee members and other Keller staff. The two-day intensive training was held at another community school and facilitated by the program developer and SELIS Center staff. The content of the training was focused on SELIS concepts (e.g., social-emotional competencies), tools, and activities; there were also presentations from teachers who had experience with implementing SELIS with their students and schools. As much as possible, I kept a running record on both days of the training to gain a better understanding of the training content and capture the experiences and perspectives of the ISS Committee members in attendance.

SELIS-related Student Activities. In the first week of school in Year 2 (fall of 2019), the ISS Committee facilitated several SELIS-related activities with students. The activities were intended to introduce SELIS concepts and tools to students for the first time. Activities were grouped by grade level, and each grade level was able to create its own emotion and behavior contract (one of the tools used in the SELIS program). I was

able to attend and observe one grade level's SELIS activity; I relied on meeting observations and notes to capture ISS Committee members' recollections of other SELIS activities with students.

Documents and Artifacts

ISS Committee meetings, SELIS trainings, staff PDs and retreats, school administrative meetings, and SELIS-related student activities yielded a wealth of documents and artifacts that I could use for data triangulation with interviews and observations. Documents included meeting materials (e.g., agendas, minutes, handouts), SELIS Center training materials (e.g., posters, handbook), and ISS Committee materials for staff PDs (e.g., handouts, PowerPoint presentation slides, poster papers). Artifacts included any SELIS-related items or products generated by students or staff during the implementation period (e.g., a SELIS visual display near the main office, talking pieces used for check-ins with students); artifacts also included any SEL materials or items that were shared with me during interviews or meetings (e.g., district-provided handbook to guide student support protocols). For any documents or artifacts that belonged to the school or staff and were not in my possession, I took photographs and wrote corresponding descriptions.

Survey Data

In November 2019, the ISS Committee chair and I co-designed a brief, informal mid-year staff survey to check in with teachers about their progress in implementing SELIS with their students. Surveys were administered in paper form and in person at the end of a staff meeting; survey items included: "How often have you implemented SELIS with students this year?", "Which SELIS tools and activities have you used with students this year?", and "I need more support from the ISS Committee in implementing SELIS with students [rate from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree]."

There was also an open-ended item that asked for suggestions on how the ISS Committee could better support the staff with SELIS implementation. All of the survey respondents (*n* = 12) were teachers.

Historical Data

In order to gain a better understanding of the historical context for this case study, I collected historical data on the school, the students and staff, and the larger community. Primary data sources included media publications and profiles about the school that were published prior to the SELIS implementation (e.g., at the launch of the Keller-University partnership); secondary data sources included research studies and briefs about the school and its community. Additionally, I collected quantitative primary data from staff and student surveys administered by Keller and the district in the spring of 2018; these data were helpful in establishing a baseline for staff and student outcomes prior to the SELIS implementation in the fall of 2018.

Researcher-Generated Data

As a GSR at Keller, I took detailed notes during most of my meetings and activities with Keller or University staff, which were not exclusively related to the ISS Committee or SELIS implementation; I also recorded these events in my calendar. As the study researcher, I kept a research journal to document relevant observations and conversations with Keller or University staff, as well as informal reflections and analytic memos. For the purpose of the study, I was able to review my notes, calendar, and research journal as additional data sources for analysis and triangulation.

Analytic Procedures

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data analysis for this study was limited to the SELIS Mid-Year Staff Survey (6 items; *n* = 12), administered in December 2019 during Year 2 of SELIS

implementation. Descriptive analysis was used for items 1-5; responses to the open-ended item were coded into categories. Survey results were used by the ISS Committee to inform implementation planning for the second half of the school year; for research purposes, I triangulated the quantitative survey data with qualitative interview and observation data about Year 2 of the SELIS implementation.

Qualitative Analysis

      Framework for Qualitative Analysis. In order to systematically address the research questions, it was helpful to first de-construct the implementation quality conceptual framework and apply it as an analytic framework (Table 3) to guide my coding (i.e., structural codes) and analyses.

Table 3. Framework for Qualitative Analysis

Research Questions (RQ)	Implementation Quality Conceptual Framework	
RQ1: What was the implementation process during the first two years of the SELIS intervention at Keller-University Community School?	Intervention Model	Core Elements
		Delivery
		Standardization
	Support System Model	Core Elements
		Delivery
		Standardization
RQ2: Which components and contextual factors significantly influenced the SELIS implementation process, and how did they influence the quality of implementation?	Contextual Factors that Affect Implementation Quality	Macro-Level Factors
		School-Level Factors
		Individual-Level Factors
	Quality of Intervention Model	Fidelity of Implementation
		Dosage of Core Elements
		Quality of Delivery
	Quality of Support System Model	Fidelity of Implementation
		Dosage of Core Elements
		Quality of Delivery

The guiding research questions for this study were: (1) What was the implementation process during the first two years of the SELIS intervention at Keller-University Community School? (2) Which components and contextual factors significantly influenced the SELIS implementation process, and how did they influence the quality of implementation?

For the first research question, coding and analysis were primarily guided by the implementation quality framework (Domitrovich et al., 2008) and its conceptualization of implementation as two distinct components—(1) the intervention and (2) the corresponding support system; each of these components is comprised of their (a) core elements, (b) delivery, and (c) standardization. Additionally, coding and analyses were guided by the developer's implementation model and theory of change (i.e., what was intended to happen), as well as emergent in vivo themes from ISS Committee members' reflections about the SELIS implementation. Examining events through participants' perspectives and in their own words allowed for a richer contextual understanding of the implementation process, revealed through their lived experiences of a shared phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

For the second research question, coding and analysis were primarily guided by the implementation quality conceptual framework (Domitrovich et al., 2008) and its ecological model of macro-, school-, and individual-level factors that may influence the quality of implementation. As with the first research question, coding and analysis incorporated emergent in vivo themes from ISS Committee members' reflections about the implementation process, implementation challenges and strategies to address these challenges, and the success or failure of implementation processes. Coding and analysis were also guided by the framework's central conceptualization of implementation quality, in which (1) the intervention and (2) the support system are

each assessed on the quality of their respective (a) core elements, (b) standardization, and (c) delivery. Accordingly, the quality of the intervention and support system was evaluated based on the following indicators: (a) dosage of core elements, (b) fidelity of implementation, and (c) quality of delivery (Domitrovich et al., 2008).

Coding. Qualitative data from interviews, observations, documents, artifacts, historical data, and researcher notes were coded and analyzed using Dedoose, a qualitative data management and analysis software. Guided by the research questions and conceptual framework for the study, coding was an iterative and cyclical process that allowed me to "query" the data by testing my assumptions and conclusions (Bazeley, 2013). Both deductive and inductive approaches were used in order to search for a priori constructs about SELIS implementation but also allow new themes to emerge from the data (Saldaña, 2016). First-cycle coding began with structural codes based on the research questions and conceptual framework for implementation quality (e.g., "intervention model: quality of delivery," "support system: core elements," or "school-level factors: school climate"); within these structural codes, I employed descriptive, versus ("punishment vs. prevention"), causation (e.g., "lack of time" leading to "low dosage of intervention"), and in vivo coding (e.g., "shifting the culture"). Using pattern and axial coding in the second cycle, similar codes from first-cycle coding were then reduced and grouped into broader categories. Finally, themes and constructs generated from first and second-cycle coding were interpreted and framed as key assertions to address the research questions (Saldaña, 2016).

For the purpose of thematic analysis (Saldaña, 2016), I examined data sources for common themes, ideas, and patterns of meaning that emerged regarding the SELIS implementation process, particularly as indicated by the ISS Committee members. Themes were generally organized by the research questions and conceptual

frameworks and provided key insights on: significant components and events of the implementation process; the fidelity, dosage, and delivery of intervention and support system components; and the macro-, school-, and individual-level contextual factors that had meaningful impacts, whether positive or negative, on the quality of implementation. I then triangulated themes across multiple sources to identify consistencies or anomalies, especially among interviews, observations, and documents.

Analytic Tools. Due to the sheer volume of qualitative data collected for this study, it was easy to get lost in the data and lose sight of my research questions, especially in the preliminary analysis stage. In an iterative and overlapping process, I employed several analytic tools to facilitate data preparation and qualitative analysis: First, I used post-hoc reflective observations (i.e., after the end of the implementation period and after I had completed data collection) to reflect more deeply on the data set as a whole and document my ongoing perceptions and understandings of the implementation process and the contextual factors that influence implementation quality. Second, I used synoptic tables to synthesize and summarize major categorical codes and subcodes, based on existing constructs from the research questions and conceptual framework or common themes that emerged across data sources. These tables were useful in identifying significant components, events, and factors that were most salient to the implementation process and framing key assertions to address the study's research questions. Third, I constructed a timeline of Years 1 and 2 of the implementation period in order to visually represent the implementation process, identify key activities and milestones of the school, and consider surrounding macro-level events that may have influenced implementation quality.

Validity. After completing multiple cycles of analyses and identifying preliminary findings, I employed triangulation (e.g., using researcher notes to verify

the implementation timeline described by interview participants); member checking

(e.g., sharing conference paper on SELIS implementation with ISS Committee); and

dialogic engagement with mentors, colleagues, and peers (e.g., debriefing with another

GSR after a staff meeting to compare our perceptions of staff attitudes about SELIS) to

assess for biases and ensure validity of my findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The analytic

tools and procedures described in this chapter allowed for detailed contextual analysis

of an SEL implementation at a community school, facilitated deeper understanding of

the complex issues and relationships at hand, and ensured greater validity of my

analyses and findings. As discussed in the next three chapters, findings from this case

study provide valuable insights to the SELIS implementation process and the

intervention components and contextual factors that influenced implementation

quality—particularly from the perspectives and experiences of the ISS Committee—and

contribute to the theoretical generalization of the implementation quality conceptual

framework (Domitrovich et al., 2008).

CHAPTER 4

PORTRAIT OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The idea that a case study is a "bounded system" (Stake, 2000) is an appealing one. In spatial and temporal terms, the present study of the SELIS implementation was bounded by Keller-University Community School and the initial two-year implementation period (as conceived by the SELIS developer). And yet, the study's conceptual framework acknowledges the complex ecology in which the SELIS implementation was conducted and the macro-level contextual factors beyond the school itself. Furthermore, none of the contextual factors in this multi-level model materialized out of thin air at the start of the implementation period; they each came with their own specific contexts that were relevant to the phenomenon of interest. Yin (1994) wisely acknowledges these complications in his definition of case study research—i.e., "scholarly inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 33)—and thus positions both phenomenon and context as fundamental elements of a case study.

The takeaway is clear—context is everything. As such, this chapter presents the historical context for Keller-University Community School and its implementation of the SELIS program. While historical context is not explicitly identified as a contextual factor in the implementation quality framework (Domitrovich et al., 2008), its effects are potentially embedded in contextual factors across all levels; for example, past experiences with other SEL interventions could affect an individual teacher's attitudes, a school's organizational health, or a district's policy decisions about creating infrastructures for SEL. Because of its potential salience to the entire multi-level model,

the historical context of this case study must be considered before any presentation of findings about the implementation process or implementation quality.

This chapter begins with a summary of major events in Keller-University Community School's history, from its founding in the 1920s up to the launch of its partnership with the University in 2016. The chapter then provides an overview of the initial implementation stage of the university partnership, before discussing the formation of the ISS Committee and the launch of SELIS as a schoolwide SEL intervention in 2018. My recounting of the school's history will most likely leave out events that others deem to be critical to the "story" of Keller; however, my goal is to focus on events that are most relevant to the SELIS implementation as the phenomenon of interest in this case study.

To capture the historical context of Keller as accurately as possible, I relied on many primary and secondary data sources: school documents and artifacts, meeting documents and artifacts, staff and student surveys, participant interviews (formal and informal), research publications, media publications and profiles, and my own observations and records as a GSR and ISS Committee member. The historical context is presented in narrative form to highlight relevant events and themes; the narrative eventually shifts to first person in order to acknowledge my positionality within the school and the study. In the interest of protecting the confidentiality of the school and study participants, the chapter will be necessarily vague about identifying details or will omit them altogether, including data sources that name the school or university.

A School in Transition

Founded in the 1920s, Keller School was intended to serve as a model for modern education. In its early years, the school prioritized the aesthetic development

of its grounds, the inclusion of students and teachers in its committees, and the expansion of student services such as after school clubs. Keller quickly became a prominent and well-respected neighborhood school, although it had yet to reckon with the growing tension around the racial segregation of students. The neighborhood's restrictive school assignment and housing policies allowed Keller to serve mainly White students well into the 1950s.

During and after World War II, the community surrounding Keller began to transform as Black people from the American South arrived in search of greater economic opportunities. In the 1950s, the civil rights movement brought about significant legal changes in housing and educational policies, paving the way for racial integration in schools like Keller and their neighborhoods. While some at Keller welcomed these efforts to eradicate racial discrimination, anti-Black sentiment overwhelmingly led White families to pull their children out of the local school district and move out of the neighborhood entirely. By 1970, the neighborhood's majority of White residents had given way to a majority of Black residents; White students left the district en masse while Black and Latino student enrollment continued to climb.

During the next few decades, the social, political, and economic assets of the neighborhood surrounding Keller declined considerably; poverty, crime, and unrest were exacerbated by the disappearance of well-paying jobs, the rise of gang and drug activity, and largely ineffective policing. These racial and structural inequities have persisted in Keller's community to the present day. At the same time, the local district attempted to integrate its schools through magnet and busing programs that took Black and Latino students to schools in White neighborhoods. Many families in Keller's neighborhood chose this option in the belief that their children would receive a better education elsewhere; students who remained at schools like Keller were most likely

from families without the knowledge and social capital to leave. Still, there were some bright spots: Keller's principal in the 1980s created an honors program to make the school more competitive and curtail the loss of students, and student and teacher reflections indicated that Keller was considered a "safe haven" within the community in the 1990s.

In the early 2000s, dozens of charter schools began to open in the neighborhoods surrounding Keller, drawing even more students away from the school. Built for a capacity of 1,500, the school saw its enrollment peak at almost 1,800 students before dropping down to its lowest point of approximately 300 students in 2016. (This was the year that Keller officially launched its partnership with the University.) At the same time, Keller saw a rise in its numbers of students with disabilities, foster youth, and homeless youth—much higher than district averages. The overall loss of students led to a reduction in the school budget and loss of long-term faculty positions, leading to a fragmented instructional environment.

During the same period, Keller was twice classified as "failing school" under the No Child Left Behind Act and experienced a series of educational reform efforts, both district-led and internally spearheaded. Reform strategies included staff development, community engagement, reconstitution (where teachers had to reapply for their jobs), charter co-location bids (to make use of Keller's unused campus space), and mentorship from another district school; as reported by school staff who experienced them, these strategies had varying degrees of success. Student academic achievement, staff morale, and the school's reputation in the community as a "bad school" appeared to be mostly unchanged, despite considerable efforts from school leaders, faculty, and other stakeholders.

The most recent reform initiative came in 2016—the partnership between Keller and a well-known public university with prior experience in developing community schools within the local district. This partnership has continued to the present day and, like any unification process between two organizations, has experienced an eventful and at times challenging transition period.

University Partnership

After achieving success with developing a community school in the district, the University was looking to partner with a struggling school that was facing closure due to low enrollment. Meanwhile, the district was looking for more ways to create high-quality public schools that would win students back from charter schools; it had previously launched a pilot schools initiative that encouraged "community-based" reform. When the district suggested Keller for the University's next partnership, Keller's new principal was quick to accept the opportunity. The partnership was announced internally in November 2015 and to the community in April 2016; the official memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Keller and the University was approved in February 2017.

During this time period, a design team of Keller faculty, district staff, University faculty, and local parents and community members worked closely to create an evidence-based roadmap for transforming the school, reversing enrollment trends, and improving academic achievement. After two years of planning, they finalized a proposal that identified a new autonomous governance structure for the school and key strategies for transforming school culture and accelerating student achievement—i.e., curriculum built around a new pedagogical model, an enhanced college-going culture, additional enrichment and extended learning opportunities, and more stable

staffing. Plans were also made to add a high school over the next few years, beginning with a 9th grade in the 2017-2018 academic year.

After initial skepticism and apprehension about the partnership—stemming from distrust of an outside organization and lack of transparency about the development process—Keller's faculty and staff seemed either cautiously optimistic or wholly enthusiastic about the University's level of commitment to the school and community. The new school proposal was approved in the fall of 2016 in a 22-3 faculty vote. In alignment with the new community school strategies, the University committed to funneling graduate students from its education department to fill teaching positions, offering free enrichment and extended learning programs (including summer workshops and activities), and creating a new college center at the school. They began delivering on some of these commitments in the spring of 2016, well before the partnership was made official. For the first time in his three years at Keller, the principal was able to fill all teaching positions and begin the following academic year with a full faculty. Student and school data collected in the spring of 2016 already showed improvements in some outcomes, including math achievement and school safety. The principal emphasized that this was a true partnership, not a takeover; a Keller teacher called it a revival. While some faculty remained understandably skeptical of the University's long-term commitment, the launch of Keller-University Community School was well underway.

The 2017-2018 academic year was the first full implementation year in which new school structures were formally put into place; these included the addition of a 9th grade, expanded professional development opportunities, and a shared governance council. While it benefited from increased enrollment due to the new 9th graders, the school was now required to undergo an extensive accreditation process for each of the

new high school grades. Accordingly, Keller faculty and staff welcomed the shift from one to two PD days per week, which allowed for increased collaboration, opportunity for high-quality professional learning, and time to complete tasks for the accreditation process. The creation of a centralized governance council, which replaced the design team and combined all the school decision-making committees into one large group, was also received positively; the governance council was intended to provide anyone who was interested in school governance with the opportunity to give their input on schoolwide decisions.

At the same time, many teachers struggled with inclusion at the beginning of the partnership process. Those who were not directly involved with the design team or shared governance council felt that there was a lack of transparency about the logistics of the partnership and lack of inclusion in decision-making processes; as a result, they still had many questions about the partnership and were not as engaged with the implementation activities. For example, because most teachers had not been part of the decision-making process in selecting the new pedagogical model for the school's curriculum, they were somewhat skeptical of its effectiveness and its "top-down" implementation approach. Additionally, University faculty or staff facilitated approximately ten PDs at Keller during the 2016-2017 academic year; while this certainly demonstrated their hands-on commitment to the partnership, they did not involve Keller faculty or staff in planning the PDs. As a result, the content of the PDs was not necessarily tailored to Keller teachers and the reality of their classrooms and students. In the initial implementation stage, Keller faculty and staff generally felt that more structures were needed to increase inclusion and a sense of ownership in the partnership process.

At the end of the partnership's first implementation year (2017-2018), Keller's administrators and staff agreed that wraparound supports for students—a key pillar of community schools (Oakes et al., 2017)—was a much-needed missing piece from their school structures. Based on a district survey from the spring of 2018, 35% of Keller students did not feel safe at school, 36% had difficult expressing their feelings, 42% did not feel connected with the school, and 38% did not agree that the school was a supportive place for students to learn. While these indicators had improved from the previous school year, there was still cause for concern. A Keller administrator shared: "Obviously we had a huge issue with discipline, just plain old breaking rules, so there were a lot of systems put in place to deal with discipline." One of the teachers identified a clear connection between students' behavioral issues and the need for social and emotional learning:

> Because students, especially in urban settings, go through many different, you know, issues and challenges, and you know, you can say all day, 'Leave it at the door.' … But the students need to understand and they need to know how to positively express their emotions so that it doesn't interfere with others' and their own learning as well.

As such, one of the primary collective goals identified by Keller and the University in the school proposal was to create a safe and supportive school culture through a system of wraparound supports that would address students' behavioral issues, reform disciplinary practices, and promote students' social-emotional competencies. In the next section, I describe the steps taken by the school to address this need.

Integrated Student Supports Committee

As previously mentioned, I came to Keller-University Community School as a GSR in the fall of 2017; my professional background was in conducting evaluations of social services and mental health supports for children and families. Since the recently

established Keller-University Community School was still finding its feet with implementing a system for integrated student supports, I partnered with another GSR to document and report on whatever student supports and protocols were currently in place. With the goal of creating an organizational chart of the school's Student Support Team and a process map to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their service referral process, my fellow GSR and I conducted exploratory interviews with eight members of the support team (i.e., administrator, restorative justice advisor, A-G counselor, foster youth counselor, general school counselor, school psychologist, Title I coordinator, and dean of discipline).

Our findings indicated that the staff often felt overwhelmed in trying to meet the many complex needs of their students and had encountered three major challenges to implementing an effective system of student supports: the lack of a centralized and accessible database for systematic identification, delegation, and tracking of student needs; low occurrence of follow-ups with parents and students to confirm whether a referral was used and whether it was effective; and low estimates of "completed" referrals and service provision. The Student Support Team members, whose time was limited due to the workload of their formal positions at the school, also found it difficult to meet on a regular basis (every two weeks) to discuss student needs and delegate case management tasks. Along with a needs assessment of students' mental health outcomes, my fellow GSR and I shared these findings at the school's final governance council meeting of the academic year (May 2018).

Based on the student survey and staff interview data, we recommended that the council form a committee to strengthen systems for coordination and integration of student supports, develop and implement additional programs to proactively support students' general health and wellness, and collaborate with the school's research and

data committee to support and inform program development through data tracking. By the end of the meeting, the council had officially elected to form the Integrated Student Supports (ISS) Committee, which would assist the Student Support Team with addressing the barriers they had identified and strengthening the school's system of integrated supports. The ISS Committee would convene for the first time in the fall of 2018; I would become one of the founding members.

The SELIS Program

Unbeknownst to me at the time, Keller and University staff had already met in early 2018 to discuss possible mental health or social-emotional supports that the University could help bring to Keller. A University faculty member who was also affiliated with the University's Community Services Center spoke at a school-site council meeting about implementing an SEL curriculum for students and staff. Based on their prior interest in SEL, two Keller staff members (a counselor and a special education teacher) were selected to attend a SELIS training in May 2018. (As described by the counselor: "They were talking about social-emotional learning so I raised my hand and said, 'I'm a social worker, I work with social-emotional learning with the children, so I'd like to participate.' And then I got the e-mail the day before saying, 'Go to this training,' and I said, 'Ok.'") In the fall of 2018, I learned that Keller would in fact be launching SELIS as a schoolwide SEL intervention. Year 1 of implementation occurred in the 2018-2019 academic year; Year 2 of implementation occurred in the 2019-2020 academic year.

The implementation of SELIS at Keller-University Community School was a collaborative effort with multiple University-affiliated partners; a summary of key stakeholders and their roles is included below (Table 4). (The following chapter will

provide an in-depth description of the SELIS implementation components and the intervention model as specified by the developer.) As envisioned by Keller's administrators and staff, SELIS was intended as a universal SEL intervention that would promote social-emotional competencies, address behavioral issues, reform disciplinary practices, and improve school climate for both students and staff. Based on its purview of student supports, the ISS Committee was quickly designated as the on-site SELIS implementation team and tasked with facilitating the implementation process with the general school staff and students. I suddenly found myself in the right place at the right time; in my capacity as a University GSR working with the ISS Committee, I would be able to simultaneously support and study the SELIS implementation. While still in the early years of my doctoral program, I was able to begin laying the foundation for my dissertation study.

Table 4: Key Stakeholders and Roles in SELIS Implementation

Stakeholder Name (Pseudonym)	Stakeholder Role in SELIS Implementation
Keller-University Community School	Site of SELIS implementation
University	University partner of Keller
Developer	Developer of SELIS intervention
SELIS Center	Training branch of SELIS developer
Community Services Center	University-affiliated center for community services; provided funding for SELIS implementation at Keller
SELIS Support Team	University- and SELIS-affiliated team of coaches, coordinators, and researchers that supported and conducted research on SELIS implementation at Keller
School A	Independent school that hosted SELIS Center training

Conclusion

Understanding the historical context of Keller-University Community School is essential for understanding the SELIS implementation process and assessing the quality of implementation. Like many under-resourced schools in underserved communities, Keller had endured a constant rotation of improvement strategies and initiatives with varying degrees of success, all of which were informed by the past experiences of the staff, the school, and the broader community. As is true for any school-based reform, the SELIS program was not implemented in a vacuum; indeed, the university partnership that brought this SEL intervention to Keller was itself another reform in the school's complicated history. As discussed in Chapter 6, the historical context in which the SELIS program was situated proved to be a significant influence on contextual factors that affected implementation processes and quality.

CHAPTER 5

BECOMING A SELIS SCHOOL

As depicted in the previous chapter, schools are complex ecosystems with countless moving parts and inhabitants. Students and school staff are human beings with ever-changing dispositions; their social and emotional needs are intangible, messy, and often difficult to address. As such, the implementation of any school-based social and emotional learning intervention—regardless of how well-designed and well-intended—is bound to be complex, ever-changing, and messy. In order to de-mystify the implementation process and competently address the research questions for this study, it was critical for me as a researcher to be clear-eyed in my documentation and examination of the SELIS implementation process, as well as the contextual factors that explain why it was important to implement an SEL intervention like SELIS at a school like Keller-University Community School.

At the same time, I endeavored to be respectful of and responsive to the sensitivities of studying and reporting on the implementation process of an SEL intervention at a school that faced many challenges in addressing student, staff, and community needs. My intention was never to criticize the school or the program, but (as discussed in Chapter 3) to be rigorous in my research methods, unbiased in my analyses and reflections, and fair in my findings. While acknowledging that there are limitations to this study and that other stakeholders might disagree with these findings (see Discussion chapter), I present this chapter as my understanding of the first two years of SELIS implementation at Keller-University Community School.

The chapter begins with an overview of the intervention and support system models as conceived by the developer and characterized by the implementation quality

framework (Domitrovich et al., 2008). The chapter then presents a chronological timeline and narrative of the SELIS implementation process at Keller, including milestones and major events during the two-year implementation period, key components of the intervention and support system, and significant themes that were identified in the analysis stage. The implementation timeline also includes surrounding events that may have impacted implementation quality and, in an effort to acknowledge my dual roles as participant and observer, relevant research activities that occurred as part of my work as a University GSR and doctoral student. The timeline serves as both a visual representation of findings—i.e., major events during the implementation process—and an analytic tool that assisted with addressing the research questions.

The timeline and narrative were constructed through the analysis and triangulation of interview transcripts (e.g., participant recollections of implementation milestones); observation field notes (e.g., ISS Committee meetings, SELIS trainings and PDs, SELIS-related student activities); documents (e.g., ISS Committee meeting minutes, SELIS Center training handbook, SELIS Support Team newsletters); artifacts (e.g., Keller internal and external websites); historical data (e.g., media and research publications); and researcher-generated data (e.g., notes, calendar). Based on detailed qualitative and contextual analysis, I endeavored to accurately synthesize the aforementioned data into a coherent and factual story. As with the previous chapter, the narrative is presented from a first person perspective whenever possible in order to acknowledge my positionality in the study and the SELIS implementation.

SELIS Intervention and Support System Models

Developer's Intervention Model

Core Elements. While this is not an effectiveness study, it is necessary to have a general understanding of SELIS's guiding principles, implementation timeline, and the main concepts, tools, and activities used in the intervention model (Table 5). SELIS focuses on a set of fundamental social-emotional competencies that align with CASEL's SEL Framework (2020b); these competencies are taught and developed through a set of SEL tools: the contract (an emotion and behavior contract), the grid (a color-coded emotion grid), the plan (a conflict resolution plan), and the reflection (a strategic reflection process)[6].

Table 5. SELIS Intervention Model

SELIS Intervention Model	Description
Guiding Principles	Program promotes social-emotional competencies in students and staff through SEL concepts, tools, and activities; program is intended to be adapted and implemented in a way that responds to each school's particular population, culture, and climate
Implementation Timeline	Year 1 focuses on professional development and learning for educators; Year 2 expands focus to student and family engagement
Contract	An emotion and behavior contract between students and staff that identifies the helpful emotions that they want to help each other feel
Grid	A color-coded emotion grid that allows students and staff to identify, rate, and express their helpful and unhelpful emotions
Reflection	A strategic reflection process for regulating unhelpful emotions and expressing helpful emotions in response to emotional situations
Plan	A conflict resolution plan for addressing and resolving interpersonal conflicts

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[6] These program components are described in generic terms so as not to identify the program, its developer, or affiliated organizations.

The SEL tools are designed to demonstrate SELIS competencies and facilitate SELIS activities but are not embedded in a prescriptive curriculum for practitioners to follow. Instead, one of the guiding principles of the SELIS program is that it is intended to be implemented and adapted in a way that responds to each school's particular population, culture, and climate, thus promoting more positive outcomes for students and staff. While the program does provide lesson plans, they are meant to be used as guides to support educators in developing their own lesson plans and incorporating SELIS concepts into existing curricula.

Delivery. As indicated by Domitrovich and colleagues (2008), the delivery strategy of an intervention is defined in terms of its duration, frequency, timing, mode of delivering core elements, and individuals responsible for implementing the intervention (i.e., delivery agents). For the purpose of this bounded case study, the duration of the initial implementation period was two academic years (2018-2019 to 2019-2020). The program recommends a gradual roll-out of SELIS lessons in the first implementation year with students, with a frequency of approximately 2 lessons per week. In terms of timing, the SELIS implementation model includes one year of professional development and learning for educators before expanding to student and family engagement in the second year of implementation. The program's mode of delivery is flexible; educators may choose to use standard SELIS lesson plans or an infused approach where SELIS is incorporated into existing curricula. Finally, the intended delivery agents for SELIS are a school's own teachers and staff rather than external specialists; there is initially a small implementation team of delivery agents trained by the SELIS Center, and then the rest of the school staff become delivery agents after being trained by the implementation team.

Standardization. Standardization of core elements is defined as "the specification or documentation of the core components of school-based interventions" (Domitrovich et al., 2008). The SELIS program provides educators and practitioners with detailed manuals, lesson plans, visual displays, and other instructional materials on SELIS concepts, tools, and activities; these materials are tailored for each grade level across elementary, middle, and high school and can be accessed through an online platform for educators.

Developer's Support System Model

Core Elements. Because of its train-the-trainer strategy, the SELIS program's support system has two interwoven strands: (1) the SELIS Center provides initial training (Year 1) and ongoing supports (Years 1 and 2) to the school's SELIS implementation team as they implement with general school staff and students, and (2) the school's SELIS implementation team provides initial training (Year 1) and ongoing supports (Years 1 and 2) to the general school staff as they implement with students. For the initial SELIS Center training, the program requires each school to send at least one school administrator and at least two mental health professionals or teachers from different grade levels. As for ongoing implementation support, the SELIS Center provides coaching sessions and online resources such as SELIS materials, sample lessons, roll-out plans, and staff training guides.

Delivery. Delivery of the support system is defined by mode of delivery, intensity, and frequency (Domitrovich et al., 2008). For both strands, the mode of delivery for the initial training is intended to be in person, either with the SELIS Center trainers at a training facility or the SELIS implementation team at the school. Ongoing support from the SELIS Center to the school's implementation team may include a combination of in-person meetings, remote activities (e.g., virtual coaching sessions,

communication via e-mail), and online resources; ongoing support from the SELIS implementation team to the general school staff includes in-person coaching at the school site as well as online resources. In terms of intensity of the initial training, the SELIS Center provides a two-day intensive training for the implementation team, while the implementation team provides gradual training (e.g., staff PDs) for general school staff over the course of the first year. Intensity and frequency of ongoing support for either strand is not explicitly described by the developer; coaching between the SELIS Center and the implementation team is most likely meant to be regular but less frequent than that between the implementation team and general school staff who all work at the same site.

Standardization. Initial training and ongoing support provided by the SELIS Center are standardized as part of the developer's training model and materials; SELIS Center employees should receive the same professional development for training and coaching educators in SELIS implementation. Additionally, the SELIS Center provides school implementation teams with standardized roll-out plans and staff training resources, although they are presented as guidelines rather than strict protocols.

Summary

In assessing the quality of the SELIS implementation process—comprised of the intervention and its corresponding support system—it is important to methodically consider the characteristics of each component as intended by the program developer and as implemented in actuality. As described by Domitrovich and colleagues (2008), the characteristics of the intervention and support system (i.e., core elements, delivery, and standardization) should be assessed on the indicators of fidelity, dosage, and quality of delivery. These indicators of program adherence and quality allow for the assessment of "the degree of discrepancy between the 'model' version of the

intervention and the support system as conceived by the developers, and the way it is implemented in real-world settings by school system personnel" (Domitrovich et al., 2008, p. 11). Careful assessment of the quality of the intervention and support system allows for theory-building and determining which characteristics are most critical for successful implementation. In the following narrative, characteristics of the intervention and support system are documented in detail and provide necessary insights on implementation quality.

SELIS Implementation Narrative: Year 1

In the fall of 2018, I returned to Keller-University Community School for my second year as a GSR. My first year had been a flurry of quick introductions, jargon-filled meetings, fleeting walk-and-talks, copious note-taking—and once in a while, moments to absorb and reflect. I had found the school to be an imposing place, both in size and complexity, and felt a bit lost within its vast campus. While the faculty and staff had welcomed me warmly as a newcomer to the school, they were naturally much too busy to hold my hand as Keller began its second full year as a university-partnered community school. I had come to Keller with the intention of helping to evaluate and improve their mental health supports, but the school was still figuring out how to streamline its system of supports and adapt to new partnership structures. While my GSR supervisor (also relatively new to the school) was always supportive and perceptive in guiding my work, I often found it challenging to wrap my mind around the needs of the school and where I could be most useful.

Nonetheless, I felt energized and hopeful at the start of a new school year. At its last meeting in the spring, the school's governance council had voted to form the ISS Committee to assist the Student Support Team and improve the school's system for

service referrals and provision. Teachers and administrators had previously identified wraparound services and learning supports as a key component of the community school model (Oakes et al., 2017) that needed to be expanded at Keller, and establishing the ISS Committee felt like a step in the right direction. By October 2018, there was another major development—Keller had partnered with the University to launch a new schoolwide SEL intervention called SELIS (Social and Emotional Learning in Schools). The ISS Committee was designated as the SELIS implementation team, and the scope of ISS work at the school (Figure 2) changed dramatically.

Figure 2. SELIS Implementation Timeline: Year 1
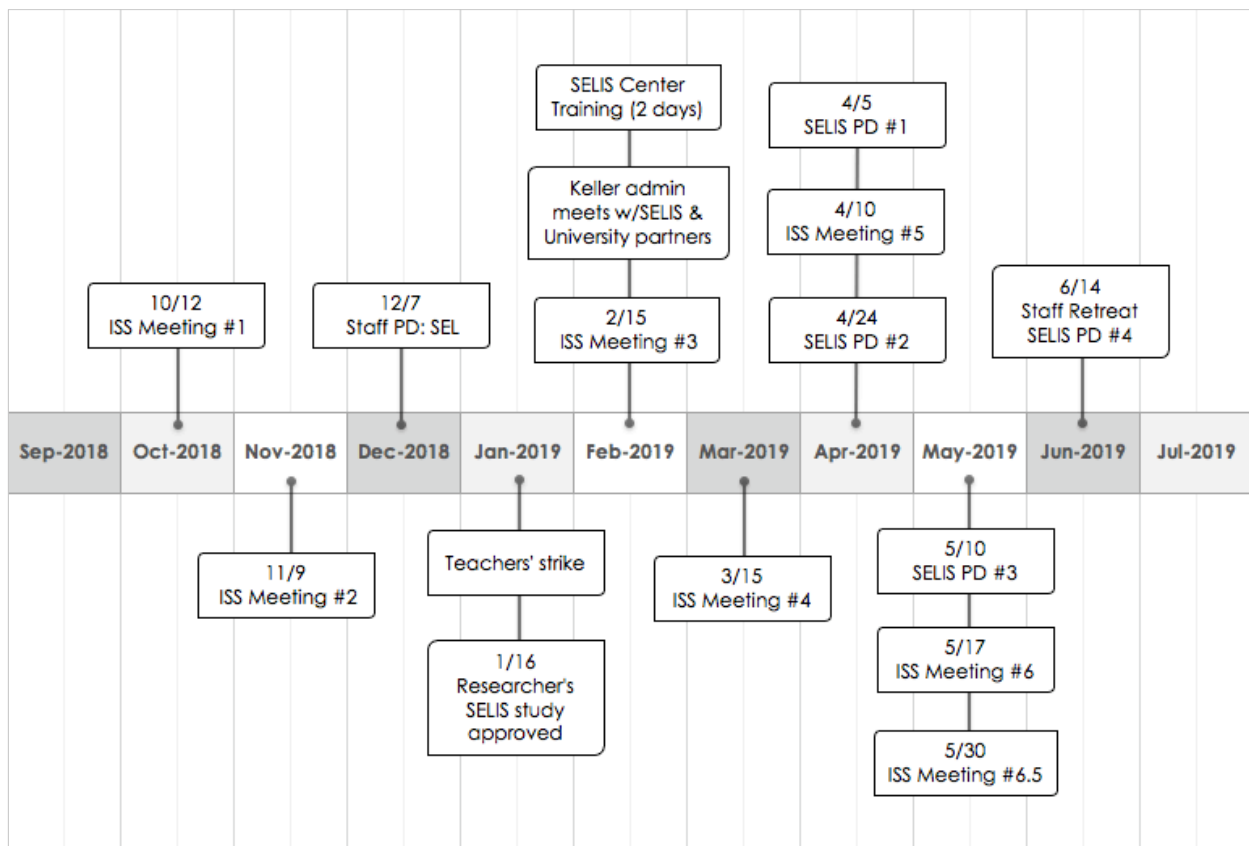
October 2018

ISS Committee Meeting #1. The first ISS Committee meeting (indicated as "ISS Meeting" in the timeline) was convened on October 12, 2018. As part of professional

development for its faculty and staff, Keller had implemented a schedule of two PDs per week in the 2017-2018 academic year. PDs were generally held on Wednesday and Friday mornings (8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.) in the school library; the second Friday PD of each month was reserved for Keller's governance committee meetings. All faculty and staff were asked to join one of the committees, each of which focused on a different area of oversight for the school: professional learning and curriculum, instruction and assessment, student experiences, community engagement, facilities and operations, partnerships, staffing, research and data, budget and governance, and now integrated student supports.

The ISS Committee was initially co-chaired by Ms. Williams, an administrator, and Ms. Lee, a University liaison already involved with the Partnerships Committee. (Since it was difficult to meet with multiple committees during one PD session, Ms. Lee eventually went back to Partnerships and periodically checked in with the ISS Committee about University supports.) Over the next two years, the ISS Committee fluctuated in membership but generally included Ms. Williams as the chair, teachers, administrative staff, mental health counselors, academic counselors, SELIS Support Team members, and me.

At the first ISS Committee meeting, the atmosphere was like that of the first day of school—an eclectic group of people who had never come together before, some meeting for the first time, uncertain but optimistic about what was to come. This was my first time meeting many of them, and I introduced myself as a University GSR who would be supporting with ISS work. (At this point I had not solidified any plans for conducting research on ISS or SELIS.) This was also the first time that Keller staff had met anyone from the SELIS Support Team (a University- and SELIS Center-affiliated team of coaches, coordinators, and researchers who were supporting several schools

with SELIS implementation). Ms. Campbell (teacher) volunteered to take minutes for the ISS Committee meetings and upload meeting materials to a shared online drive that all members could access.

Ms. Williams, an experienced school administrator with a focus on special education, began with some general remarks about the purpose of the ISS Committee (i.e., "strategize to support the socio-emotional needs of students and create wraparound services at Keller with the University"). The conversation quickly turned to SELIS, and staff jumped right in with discussing the program's SEL tools; they wanted to implement the emotion grid right away and the emotion and behavior contract by the end of the second semester. One teacher suggested, "We should have school-level and classroom-level contracts. Some teachers already do something similar with their students." At this point in time, Ms. Gutierrez (counselor) was the only member of the ISS Committee that had attended a formal SELIS training; it seemed that she had already shared some of the main concepts and tools with her colleagues.

The committee discussed how SELIS would allow Keller to serve students as a whole ("students will have the opportunity to use SELIS as a way to express their feelings and emotions"), while the school's Student Support Team was more focused on individual students with more severe needs. Alexandra (SELIS Support Team coordinator) pointed out that the SELIS model recommends one school year of faculty training before rolling out with students. "I agree that it's important to get staff trained and involved," Ms. Williams responded, "but there is an urgent need for our students to get this intervention." Alexandra agreed that Keller could focus on supporting students without losing the component of faculty training. This appeared to be a compromise between the intended SELIS implementation model and the real-life, urgent needs of a community school; however, Keller did not officially roll out

SELIS activities with students until the fall of 2019 (Year 2 of implementation). Additionally, Ms. Williams made sure to send as many committee members as possible to the SELIS training in February 2019.

Even at this early stage, the ISS Committee was able to identify some potential challenges to the implementation and strategies for addressing them. In particular, committee members knew they would first need to model SELIS for teachers to avoid overwhelming them with a new classroom intervention. "We need to collaborate with teachers," Ms. Williams said, elaborating that they may not feel equipped to handle students' mental health needs and may need additional support. The teachers on the committee were charged with thinking of ideas for incorporating SELIS concepts and tools into the classroom; Alexandra also shared that SELIS provides activity guides and lesson plans for classroom implementation. The committee agreed that the main SEL tools should be rolled out gradually during staff PDs and split between two years (i.e., two in the first year, two in the second year). Ms. Gutierrez pointed out that some students were already familiar with resilience and mindfulness activities (e.g., community circles) from her current SEL work and that SELIS concepts and tools should be merged with existing practices as much as possible.

Ms. Thompson, the head of the Student Support Team, asked if the ISS Committee could create a visual for the school's tiered approach for interventions, which now included SELIS as a Tier 1 whole-school support. This was a project that I had been working on with Ms. Thompson and the Student Support Team since the previous year; I was hopeful that the introduction of SELIS would be able to move the project forward. Alexandra then shared some handouts of SELIS resources and lesson plans for elementary and middle school students.

At the end of the meeting, Ms. Williams confirmed that the ISS Committee was officially the SELIS implementation team. She identified several action items for the committee members: (1) figure out how to implement the emotion grid with students, (2) identify strategies to create buy-in with the teachers, (3) begin integrating SELIS tools and activities within the committee (e.g., emotion check-ins, committee-level emotion contract) before rolling them out with teachers and students, (4) start looking at PD dates to schedule a staff training on SELIS, and (5) create a more focused agenda for the next committee meeting. (The committee also agreed that the monthly meetings would be moved to an unoccupied classroom so that we would have a quieter, more private workspace away from the other committees.) On the whole, everyone seemed to leave the inaugural ISS Committee meeting feeling excited about next steps for the SELIS implementation.

November 2018

ISS Committee Meeting #2. At the second meeting (November 9), Ms. Williams started with an emotion check-in with the group as a way to begin modeling SELIS activities. The committee began to plan for the first SELIS training with the general school staff. Ms. Williams was still working with the other administrators to lock down a PD date, but it would be possibly be as soon as December 7. Ms. Campbell and Ms. Green (teacher) were enthusiastic about modeling a "community circle" activity that incorporated the emotion grid at the staff PD, and the committee continued to make connections between SELIS and existing school practices (e.g., linking the emotion and behavior contract with the school's community circles and restorative justice agreements). However, Mr. Davis (counselor) cautioned that the community circles and similar SELIS activities needed to have clearer boundaries; he had recently experienced an "influx" of risk assessment requests from teachers after students shared troubling

statements about their mental health or safety during the circles. The committee worried that teachers would be put off by SEL activities if they were scared about "opening a can of worms" with their students. Mr. Davis and Ms. Gutierrez were acknowledged as the school's trained mental health professionals who could provide appropriate support to students and training to staff.

It was decided that Ms. Williams and Ms. Gutierrez would take the lead with developing the SELIS training for the general staff, with a focus on community circles and check-ins using the emotion grid. Mr. Davis emphasized the need for developing a shared language for SEL among the staff: "We need to give teachers time to familiarize themselves with SELIS, with these activities, with the vocabulary." Ms. Campbell suggested that the staff could do a community circle during every Wednesday PD (no matter the PD topic) in order to get them used to the activity and comfortable with facilitating it with their students. At the close of the meeting, Ms. Williams shared that Keller was working on a memorandum of understanding with the district to become an official placement site for interns from the University's department of social work. The committee acknowledged the need for more mental health professionals on site every day of the week; this was when I learned that Mr. Davis was not a full-time staff member at Keller and that Ms. Gutierrez's work was split between academic and mental health counseling.

While Alexandra was unavailable to attend the November committee meeting, she later shared that the SELIS Support Team had received district approval to conduct surveys with Keller staff (emotions in the workplace) and with students (resilience) as part of an evaluation on the SELIS implementation. The resilience survey had been developed by the district's mental health department and required a Psychiatric Social Worker (PSW) to administer it with students. (Since Keller did not currently have a PSW,

Alexandra would have to request someone from the district to come to the school and administer the survey.) Around this time, my GSR supervisor and I began discussing the possibility of me conducting a qualitative case study on the SELIS implementation, but I also wanted to make sure that the school would not be overwhelmed by additional research projects.

December 2018

Staff PD on SEL. Ms. Williams was able to reserve the December 7th PD for the ISS Committee, but the ISS Committee did not feel ready to begin rolling out SELIS with the rest of the staff. Instead, the administrators invited a faculty member from the University's education department to facilitate a broader training on using SEL at Keller. (Ms. Williams: "This will frame our work.") The PD was well-attended and seemed engaging to Keller faculty and staff, many of whom shared their challenges with providing social-emotional supports to their students. Ms. Gutierrez felt that the success of the SEL training boded well for rolling out SELIS at a later date.

The monthly committee meetings scheduled for December 12 were canceled.

January 2019

Teachers' Strike. A weeklong teachers' strike ended in a bargaining deal that included provisions for bringing more wraparound services and staff to local schools and establishing more community schools in the district. With all the disruptions experienced by Keller staff and students due to the strike, the January committee meetings were postponed to February.

SELIS Research Proposal. My research proposal for a qualitative case study on the SELIS implementation at Keller was approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), Keller's Research and Data Committee, and the district. I shared this update at the ISS Committee meeting in February.

February 2019

  Meeting between Keller Administration, University Partners, and SELIS Center Trainer. On February 6, Keller administrators hosted a meeting with University partners and a lead trainer from the SELIS Center to discuss necessary supports for the SELIS implementation and social-emotional supports more broadly for the school.

  SELIS Center Training. Also in early February, a group of ISS Committee members (including me) and a couple of non-ISS staff attended an intensive two-day training on the SELIS program. The training fees were paid for by the University, who also sent a coordinator (Sophia) from the SELIS Support Team to attend the training along with Keller staff. In total there were seven Keller staff members attending the SELIS training, alongside approximately 70 educators and practitioners from other schools and agencies. Attendees were seated at eight round tables in a spacious auditorium; we had a table to ourselves due to the size of our group. The training was hosted at a newly remodeled community school (School A) that had been partnered with the SELIS Center and implementing SELIS for almost five years; School A called themselves a "SELIS school."

  Each day of training was scheduled for 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Presentation slides were projected on a large screen in the front; the training also included many activities and discussions in between the presentations. The first day was focused on the foundations of emotional intelligence[7] (EI), evidence-based SELIS competencies, and the introduction and practice implementation of the emotion and behavior contract (one of the program's main SEL tools). The three trainers were from the SELIS Center and included the creator of the program, who started off by saying, "SELIS is not a

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[7] The SELIS Center uses Salovey and Mayer's (1990) definition of "emotional intelligence" in referring to social-emotional competencies and skills.

curriculum and it's not an assembly." He also emphasized the importance of promoting EI in schools: "For real systems change, we need to get leaders trained in emotional intelligence."

For the most part, the Keller staff were engaged with and enthusiastic about the content of the training, taking frequent notes and making affirmative comments during the presentations. Whenever the trainers provided time for group discussions, our table was quick to speak, eager to brainstorm, and supportive of each other's ideas about the implementation process. For example, on the topic of implementing SELIS with staff before students, Mr. Davis shared:

> We need buy-in from the leadership staff, then the teachers. … Teachers think, "What part of my curriculum are you going to disrupt? I'm teaching my curriculum, and if you come in, you're going to disrupt that." You have to teach them that this is something you can integrate into the curriculum. They've had all these things from the district, like [name of middle school SEL curriculum]. We have big books on them, but are they implemented? No, because the teachers aren't sure how to integrate it."

Ms. Campbell added, "Also, time—teachers don't have enough time to go through the books, to study them and then implement them. They have to take the time to learn how to merge all these things." Mr. Davis agreed: "We're not getting enough of that time at our school."

Keller staff also demonstrated the EI competencies we were learning about throughout the day. During a group activity to create an emotion contract for the table—i.e., identify emotions we would like to feel during the training and behaviors for achieving those emotions—Ms. Thompson (Student Support Team leader) had some difficulty with getting the other staff to follow the trainers' instructions and identify "measurable" indicators for the emotion goals we identified (excited, creative, informed, engaged, hopeful). Her tone of voice became more frustrated as she tried to

explain what "measurable" means, and another staff member said, "You're being salty." Ms. Thompson nodded, took a breath, and said, "I have to remove the emotion that I'm attaching to this activity. I have to distance myself." She then gave a little shrug and laughed; the others responded encouragingly: "You're doing a great job." Once we finished the contract, everyone proudly signed their names to the poster and agreed that contract should be implemented with all stakeholders at Keller (e.g., creating a family contract during parent workshops). The staff discussed concrete details for implementation: "We need to look at our PD dates. We need a PD to just introduce the concepts, talk about what we've learned, decide on the phases. And then another PD to do the contract with the faculty."

At the end of the day, the trainers reiterated that SELIS was designed to be compatible with different schools and contexts: "Some of you are already doing SEL things in your classrooms. We're the last people that would tell you to drop everything else. That's why SELIS is not a curriculum—it's a mindset for thinking about emotional intelligence." A teacher at another table asked, "We're already doing [another SEL curriculum] at our school, now we're adding SELIS—how do we integrate the two?" (Several Keller staff nodded in agreement.) One of the trainers responded, "That's what we call 'intervention fatigue.' We can help you identify the similarities of the interventions and help you layer them on each other." Another teacher then asked, "We've been told before that one intervention will work with another, and sometimes that's just not true." (Keller staff nodded again.) The trainer replied, "Tomorrow we'll learn about more tools that can help you with these issues."

The second day of training was focused on introducing and practicing with the rest of the SEL tools (emotion grid, reflection, and conflict resolution plan). Of the seven Keller staff who attended the previous day, six returned for the second full-day

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training; Mr. Davis was unable to attend due to appointments with students and parents back at the school. The trainers began by reflecting on the contract activity from the day before and asking attendees to consider the five emotion goals we had identified—i.e., how we wanted to feel during the SELIS training. The Keller staff's goals were to feel excited, creative, informed, engaged, and hopeful.

At this point, Ms. Thompson passed a note around our table, informing us that we should be mindful of our technology use; apparently someone from the training had commented to one of Keller's administrators after the previous day that our table had been frequently using our phones and laptops and were somewhat inattentive. Since many other attendees were using their cell phones and laptops during the training, the Keller staff felt unfairly singled out by this comment, which ended up affecting the tone for the rest of the day. When the trainers asked attendees to practice using the emotion grid (i.e., identifying and categorizing their emotions), the Keller staff shared at the table that they felt passive-aggressive, angry, frustrated, and disappointed. Later, after having all the tables compete in a relay game, one of the trainers shared that at another SELIS training they had jokingly disqualified one group for cheating. One of the Keller staff wondered, half-joking, if they were the only minority group at that training. (Our group consisted almost entirely of people of color—Black, Latino, and Asian—while the majority of the training attendees appeared to be White.)

Nonetheless, the Keller staff endeavored to stay engaged with the training content. Ms. Gutierrez connected with the idea of using the emotion grid with students to get on the same page emotionally: "That's co-regulation, not just self-regulation, because the kids are learning from us. They're regulating based on how we're regulating." As with the previous day, the staff were actively brainstorming ways to

implement SELIS at Keller; they paid particular attention to the teachers who were invited to share examples of embedding SELIS in their classrooms and curricula (e.g., an English teacher mapping the emotion grid onto the hero's emotional journey in a novel). During a lunch-break tour of School A, the Keller staff also took photos and made note of many examples of SELIS tools and visuals on the walls of the classrooms. One of the presenters articulated a major concern shared by the ISS Committee, followed by a reassurance:

> A common reaction from teachers is, "I'm already working 24/7 and you want me to do something else?" But really, SELIS is about adding to what you already do, thinking about ways to enrich your classroom activities, and creating an emotional connection to your activities to get students' buy-in.

> Thinking practically, the Keller staff identified several concrete ideas for integrating the emotion grid with the school's existing practices, such as adding a jumbo-sized grid to the bulletin board outside of the main office, putting grids on classroom doors, and using grids at every staff PD. As described by Ms. Campbell:

> We need to first explain the importance of the grid. Then every PD has to start with a check-in, then segue into whatever is on the agenda. That's how you get people acclimated to it. Whoever's in charge of each PD should use it. We have to get them using the language and terms and placing themselves on the grid and identifying their emotions.

The others agreed: "We need to get people used to it and feeling the normalcy of it. Then the next phase is getting the teachers using it in the classrooms, after we get their buy-in." "We need to get buy-in from key stakeholders—the admin, the parents, the coaches." Interestingly, the staff also incorporated recent events into planning: "We should capitalize on the strike and use that momentum to get people excited." "We should identify how we got to the strike—we felt ignored, frustrated, etc.—and how we're feeling now—less red, but still a bit red. We can have everyone check in and indicate where they are on the grid."

Another key point of discussion was the importance of modeling SELIS tools and activities with the general staff: "We need to be exemplars." "A lot of them are doing similar things already, but it just needs to be more purposeful." "We can do a 'learning lunch' with staff to make it part of our culture." The staff had mentioned some of these ideas during previous ISS Committee meetings, but now that they were more knowledgeable about the SELIS tools and activities, they seemed even more enthusiastic about implementation planning. (Seeing that I had been taking careful notes, one of the teachers requested that I share them with the ISS Committee after the training so that we would all be on the same page about the implementation plan.)

The second half of the day was focused on introducing and practicing the other two SEL tools, the reflection and the conflict resolution plan. Using the reflection tool, students and staff can learn to pause after receiving an unpleasant stimulus, reflect on how to have a positive and helpful response, and then act. For the group activity, the trainers asked each table to create and perform a skit that demonstrated a stressful event and a successful reflection. One of the staff suggested a scenario of a student being accused by her groupmates of not doing her work. Laughing, everyone quickly caught on and began adding to the storyline: "She could be accused of using her phone." The staff appeared to be using humor to diffuse the tension of the earlier situation; while they may still have felt offended by the accusation of not paying attention, they seemed to have worked through their initial emotional responses. In fact, they had instinctively applied the reflection strategy to respond positively to a negative stimulus, and they seemed to bond over the shared experience as something to laugh at and support each other through.

In the final activity of the day, the trainers had everyone stand up and get into a large circle. The creator of the program asked us to close our eyes, imagine our ideal

school environment, and think of and share one word that describes it. The Keller staff were emphatic as they shared their words: "Productive." "Happy." "Creative." "Safe." "Supportive." After the training ended, our group held up the posters we had created in the last two days and took a group photo. On the whole, the ISS Committee seemed to feel energized by the SELIS training and excited to begin implementation with the rest of the school staff.

ISS Committee Meeting #3. The next ISS Committee meeting (February 15) was about a week after the SELIS training; it was also the first committee meeting since the teachers' strike. (This was only the third time we had convened this school year due to the holidays, the strike, and other interruptions.) We had two first-time attendees: Ms. Martinez, a social worker who worked for the district, and Naomi, a SELIS Support Team coach (who called in via speaker phone). Of the 11 attendees, six of us had attended the SELIS training. Ms. Williams, who had not been able to attend, asked us to share updates and reflections from the training. The general consensus was that the training provided helpful examples of using SELIS and that implementation seemed doable but needed buy-in from teachers and administrators. Ms. Campbell shared her intention to pilot some SELIS tools and activities with her students for a couple of weeks. I also confirmed that I had uploaded my notes from the SELIS training to the ISS Committee's shared drive.

The rest of the meeting was focused on planning a PD roll-out schedule for the general school staff. The first staff PD on SELIS was scheduled for April 5, and there was a reverse minimum day at the end of April when the committee could have up to three hours of training time. Ms. Lee also shared that the committee could continue staff training during paid full-day retreats in the summer. The goal was to have the entire staff fully trained in SELIS by the end of the summer; the school would then be

ready for implementation with students at the beginning of the new school year. While

acknowledging that the last few months of the year were always very busy for staff,

the committee wanted to give as much time to staff development and training as

possible. As described by Ms. Williams:

> We want to be strategic about how to roll out. We want to give them the feeling
> of a "full-court press" at the beginning of the school year. For now we're
> introducing some things and want people to get their feet wet, they can try out
> some things this year. But next year will be the full school roll-out. It's good for
> many of us to have been trained so that we can do the work of carrying the PD.
> Our community as a whole has many social-emotional needs.

Ms. Campbell—who had attended the SELIS Center training and, coincidentally, had

also participated in a SELIS roll-out at the previous school where she worked—shared

some key strategies from her experience:

> We made SELIS part of our agendas; every teacher had a must-do on their
> agendas for the day, something that was social-emotional. We had a couple of
> years of [SEL curriculum A] and [SEL curriculum B] modeled by [the University],
> but it gave people opportunities to use things that we were comfortable with.
> We changed our mission to include social-emotional language. We made sure
> people knew that it was a requirement.

The committee acknowledged that it was important to start creating a "culture" of

SELIS at the school, beginning with the very first training, and that learning and using

the same SEL language would support this culture.

For the first training on April 5, Naomi (SELIS coach) offered to provide an initial

overview of the foundations of SELIS and the emotional intelligence mindset. The

committee agreed that teachers needed to understand the "why" behind SEL and the

SELIS program before beginning implementation; teacher buy-in continued to be an

important consideration for the roll-out. The committee also acknowledged that there

was still a general feeling among teachers that they were not equipped to deal with

student trauma or sensitive situations that may arise from implementing SEL activities.

Ms. Thompson shared: "Teachers do try to take it on already. It's a lot to take on. The students have a lot of trauma and it can be hard for staff to handle." Although she acknowledged these challenges, Ms. Williams reminded the committee that some of the teachers had already had up to three trauma-informed trainings and that there were on-site mental health professionals who could assist teachers if students were triggered and needed support.

Two research initiatives were introduced at this meeting. Ms. Martinez (district social worker) and Ms. Gutierrez (counselor) shared that they had administered a resilience survey with the sixth graders for a baseline assessment of student outcomes including safety, stress, and trauma. The SELIS Support Team intended to use this data as part of their evaluation of the SELIS implementation at Keller; the intention was to re-administer the resilience survey at the end of Year 2 (implementation with students) in order to track student outcomes over time. Additionally, I introduced my newly approved qualitative study on the SELIS implementation and asked the committee to complete consent forms to participate in interviews or observations, which they did right after the meeting. Alexandra requested an overview of my study to share with the SELIS Support Team and SELIS developer.

After the meeting, Naomi offered to provide a suggested outline of the scope and sequence of the upcoming PD sessions, which the committee could then provide feedback on to ensure that the PD sessions fit with the goals of the school. In alignment with the SELIS implementation model, she also noted that the goal of this year's PDs was to support teachers in their understanding of SELIS and the tools, and the goal of next year's PDs was to maintain faculty and staff understanding while building toward schoolwide implementation with students.

March 2019

ISS Committee Meeting #4. The fourth committee meeting (March 4) was dedicated to planning the April 5th PD and introducing SELIS to the general staff for the first time. ("April 5th is our launch date!") As previously decided, Naomi would take the lead in the first training and "wean" her involvement for subsequent trainings so that Keller staff could take over facilitation. The committee decided to spend 80 minutes of the 90-minute PD on the introduction of SELIS and then 10 minutes on the staff survey being administered by the SELIS Support Team. At Alexandra's suggestion for Keller staff to demonstrate more ownership over SELIS, the committee decided to facilitate the welcome and introduction; they would also reach out to the Research and Data Committee to have a Keller staff member help introduce the survey as something that supports the SELIS implementation. Alexandra added that survey respondents would also receive a Starbucks gift card.

The committee agreed that at this early stage, they should focus on getting the staff excited about SELIS and not scare them with the "data element." They brainstormed some ideas for priming the staff before the first PD, such as making posters that said "Got SELIS? Coming April 5th!" and putting them up in the bathrooms and other high-traffic areas in the school. ("We want people to start asking, 'What's SELIS?'") Mr. Davis suggested that the committee could also get t-shirts made that said "Got SELIS?" and wear them around the school and at the SELIS PDs.

During this meeting, Ms. Green, one of Keller's newer teachers, asked a few clarifying questions about the SELIS implementation: "Who decided that we're going to do SELIS? Is SELIS trauma-informed? Will all the teachers need to attend the SELIS training?" Ms. Williams explained that SELIS came about through Keller's partnership with the University (Community Services Center) and the University's partnership with the SELIS developer, then added, "It was amazing that we didn't have a schoolwide

intervention considering the level of need here." (Mr. Davis was quick to say that Keller did have other SEL supports before; the committee would have to "make sure people don't think of SELIS as just another thing." He was generally concerned that staff would get confused with all the different SEL and restorative justice supports, but Alexandra reassured him that it was smart for the committee to integrate SELIS with existing practices.) Ms. Williams and Alexandra clarified that SELIS was not a trauma-informed SEL intervention but that the University had developed a trauma-informed resiliency program that could be paired with SELIS in the next stage of implementation. Ms. Williams also confirmed that the teachers would not have to attend the two-day intensive training, because the SELIS implementation team had been formally trained and were now going to train the rest of the school staff with assistance from the SELIS Center and SELIS Support Team.

At the end of the meeting, the committee agreed to work on posters and t-shirts in preparation for the PD. (One of the teachers suggested putting a QR code on the posters "to be more tech-y and appeal to the younger staff"; the code would take people to the SELIS website.) Ms. Williams asked Alexandra to see if the SELIS Center could provide the committee with official posters of the emotion grid. Based on the planning decisions from the last two committee meetings, Alexandra also offered to create and share a SELIS roll-out timeline that would indicate the facilitators and purpose for each meeting—"I feel good about this, you guys are so on top of things."

April 2019

SELIS PD #1. The first staff PD on SELIS (indicated as "SELIS PD" on the timeline) occurred on April 5 and was held in the school library. (I was unable to attend because I was out of town for a weeklong conference.) Based on later debriefs and the meeting minutes for the following ISS Committee meeting, the PD went smoothly, the

committee members were upbeat and energetic, and the general school staff seemed interested in the program and roll-out. As planned, the ISS Committee wore matching "Got SELIS?" t-shirts and introduced themselves as the SELIS implementation team, then invited Naomi to present an overview of the SELIS program, the emotional intelligence mindset, and the SEL tools. Alexandra and Ms. Wright (a teacher from the Research and Data Committee) then introduced the staff survey on workplace emotions and supports.

ISS Committee Meeting #5. Based on the meeting minutes, the fifth committee meeting (April 10) was focused on planning the next SELIS PD on April 24 and scheduling all the SELIS PDs through the summer; the committee also outlined the agenda items for each PD. (I was also unable to attend this meeting due to the weeklong conference.) The SELIS PD on April 24 would provide a deep dive on the four SEL tools, with a different pair of committee members presenting on and facilitating exercises for each tool; the PD would end with Mr. Davis facilitating an exercise using the reflection tool and the emotion grid. In order to maximize engagement and buy-in from the staff, the committee intended to incorporate interactive activities into the SELIS PDs whenever possible.

SELIS PD #2. The second SELIS PD (April 24) was held in the school library. (I was unable to attend this PD due to a prior work commitment.) Based on later debriefs, the committee members worked well in pairs to introduce the four SEL tools and facilitate break-out activities with the general staff. The PD included a deeper dive into the emotion grid compared to the other tools.

May 2019

SELIS PD #3. The third SELIS PD with Keller staff (May 10) was titled "It's All About You!" The first slide of the PowerPoint presentation (projected on a screen in

the library) included two guiding quotes for the PD: "Self-care isn't selfish" and "You cannot pour from an empty cup, you must fill your cup first." The ISS Committee and SELIS Support Team, once again wearing their "Got SELIS?" t-shirts, provided breakfast and SELIS "swag" bags (emotion grid posters) to the Keller staff. The main facilitators from the ISS Committee were Ms. Campbell (high-energy welcome and review of SELIS tools from the previous PD), Ms. Thompson (overview of self-care and introduction of self-care activities that had been prepared in different classrooms), and Ms. Gutierrez (how self-care is related to the "why" of SELIS; "We're doing this for ourselves so we can better serve the kids"). Staff were then instructed to select from one of four self-care activities to participate in (i.e., painting, exercise, sensory, or meditation stations) and disperse to the different classrooms.

I attended the painting activity, which was set up in a corner of the library and facilitated by Mr. Miller (an administrative coordinator and ISS Committee member). Each of the participants (about 10 staff members) had their own easel, canvas, and painting supplies and were given about 20 minutes to paint whatever they wanted. With soft music playing the background, participants engaged in lighthearted chit-chat about Bob Ross, jazz festivals, Mother's Day, and the end of the school year. Mr. Miller took some photos of the group and offered encouragement ("I like that!" "Yours looks great!" "You all look so cute!").

After coming back to the main room of the library, the groups for each self-care station shared their experiences. The sensory group showed off their Play-Doh and stress balls, while the painting group showed off their artwork. Ms. Campbell facilitated a check-in activity where staff were asked to share with their "elbow partners" about how the self-care activities made them feel and how they could continue self-care in their daily routines. Some of the staff shared in the large group: "I

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liked the meditation." "There were things that we did that I want to do with my students." "That was nice." Ms. Campbell thanked those who shared and gave them each a Target gift card.

In a quick debrief after the PD, the committee shared that the activities went well and there were lots of good photos; the SELIS Support Team members shared that it was good to remind the staff about the "why" of self-care and SELIS. Later, one of the PD facilitators shared her frustration that the beginning portion of the training felt a bit disorganized and rushed. On my way out of the school, I passed by a classroom with a glossy emotion grid poster displayed on the door.

ISS Committee Meeting #5. At the beginning of the fifth committee meeting (May 17), Ms. Thompson suggested that everyone share a "glow and grow" to debrief about the SELIS PD on May 10. Committee members agreed that the general staff were engaged and relaxed and that giving them the opportunity to choose their own self-care activities was effective in garnering more support and buy-in. The committee also recognized that the PD agenda was packed a little too full and there was not enough time to tie everything together at the end; they wanted to be more strategic with time management for the next PD.

With the end of the school year approaching (June 7), Ms. Williams wrote out the proposed timeline for future SELIS PDs (end of Year 1 and beginning of Year 2 of implementation). There was a full-day, off-site staff retreat scheduled for June 14 to wrap up the school year, and there was another full-day, off-site staff retreat scheduled for August 16 to start off the next school year. The committee emphasized the importance of getting Keller's entire faculty and staff to the August PD, including paraprofessionals, office staff, campus aides, cafeteria staff, and facilities staff ("We want to dig in with everyone about what we want SELIS to look like").

For the June retreat, the committee decided to focus on the reflection tool and how to use it with students at Keller; they discussed how to bring SELIS Center materials into the roll-out with staff and students (e.g., reflection tool videos). They were also intentional about supporting committee members who had not yet had a chance to lead any PDs. Ms. Williams encouraged Ms. Green to share her ideas for the retreat: "I know you're still learning and so am I, we're in that together. But it's important to get the teachers' perspective and I want to hear your voice in this process." Ms. Gutierrez added, "Ms. Green, it's like how you work with your kids in the classroom when they get frustrated. You're really good at working with them through all that." Alexandra suggested that Ms. Green could co-facilitate a lesson plan at the retreat to demonstrate how to embed the emotion grid into the curriculum.

Ms. Williams then shared that the district was planning to prioritize [name of middle school SEL curriculum] to promote social-emotional well-being and decrease instances of depression and suicidal ideation. Alexandra was confident about being able to integrate [middle school SEL curriculum] with SELIS, but Ms. Williams was concerned about accountability:

> I don't want to tell the district we're doing SELIS and then they come and don't see it in our classrooms. We need to package SELIS so that it's practical and it's happening in the classroom, so the district can see that. We want to start this in August with the kids. We talked about every single day having a SELIS activity, during lunch, during advisory. We need to give teachers things to do—the likelihood of them coming up with activities on their own is small.

At the end of the meeting, the committee discussed their long-term ISS and SELIS goals for internal purposes and accreditation documentation. In addition to goals that had previously been identified (e.g., coordinate system of integrated supports, track student and family outcomes, offer additional programs from University and community partners), the committee identified two new major goals: (1) create the

Keller-University Wellness Center in 5 years or less, and (2) incorporate SELIS into Keller's long-term wellness supports for students and families.

ISS Committee Meeting #6.5. This working meeting (May 30) was added outside of the monthly committee schedule so that the committee would have more time to plan the June retreat. While the main topics of the retreat had already been identified and Ms. Campbell had already created the "skeleton" of the PowerPoint presentation, the slides needed to be assigned to committee members and filled out with more content. She uploaded the file to the shared drive and projected the PowerPoint on the screen so that everyone could review it at the same time; the committee shared positive feedback on what she had created: "It looks great." "These memes are hilarious." As they talked about which activities to use, how to organize the flow of the content, and how to keep the staff engaged, Ms. Campbell edited and rearranged slides to reflect the changes.

The committee members were focused on the best way to introduce and demonstrate the reflection tool for the general staff. They drew from their own experiences of triggering events that would resonate with the staff and students, as well as strategies for being their "best selves." Ms. Gutierrez elaborated on the use of the reflection tool on an individual level: "It's about expressing emotions. Sometimes our kids come after us and start cursing. We can talk about how we get activated by our students—what should we do? What's our reflection process to deal with these situations?" The committee also considered the idea of "our best selves as a team, as the whole school." Ms. Thompson suggested, "Let's talk about the reputation of the school. What happens when we're out in public and people ask us where we work and we say Keller and they go, 'Ugh'? How can we as a team improve the reputation of the school?" Ms. Williams added, "We rarely get to think about ourselves as a team. Many

staff just focus on their own roles, what they're teaching, or the smaller teams we're in, but we as a school should think about ourselves as a team and how our actions could affect the entire team."

The meeting was originally scheduled for one hour, but when I left for another meeting an hour and a half later, the committee members were still planning.

June 2019

Staff Retreat and SELIS PD #4. The last SELIS PD of the school year (June 14) was a full-day staff retreat (9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.) and held at a local art gallery named for a renowned Black art curator and community activist; the gallery included historical photographs of the 1968 Black Panther Party, a memorial dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr., and busts of world leaders like Mahatma Ghandi. Five ISS Committee members and two SELIS Support Team members presented and facilitated different sections of the PD throughout the day; there were also three other SELIS Support Team staff who participated in activities and helped with administrative tasks (e.g., passing out prizes, setting up refreshments, etc.). In total, approximately 20 Keller staff members (including administrators) participated in the retreat.

The PD was titled: "Teaching with Our Best Selves using the SELIS Reflection Tool." After Ms. Campbell welcomed everyone to the retreat ("Thanks to all of you for coming here with good attitudes") and led a fun meme activity, the facilitators began with a slide of the objectives for the day: "Participants will learn about the reflection tool, in order to identify characteristics of their best selves, identify common triggers for educators, choose emotion regulation strategies that align with their best selves, and redirect emotions." They also established some norms for the retreat, knowing that some of the content would be sensitive and potentially triggering: "Be present, be a participant, practice being openminded, be genuine with each other about

ideas/challenges/feelings, and treat each other with dignity and respect." These norms set the tone for the day as the Keller staff opened up about topics that were usually not discussed in work settings.

After acknowledging that we were in a "powerful space," Naomi asked the retreat participants to think about the strategies they planned to use to stay in a helpful emotional state. The staff shared their thoughts: "My emotions are changing but coming here I feel energized by my fellow staff." "Practice gratitude. Even on days when I'm struggling with my students, I think of it as a learning moment." Naomi then reviewed the core SELIS concepts, with participants calling out the names of SEL tools and skills that they had learned from previous PDs, before introducing the new reflection tool and its goals for self-regulation. In a group activity, participants were asked to brainstorm strategies for shifting and regulating emotions. ISS Committee members moved around the room and helped to facilitate conversations within the smaller groups. During the share-out, Mr. Lewis, a veteran teacher at Keller, began to shout "WAK!" as affirmation after colleagues had shared. "Everybody, Naomi doesn't know what WAK means," he said after seeing her confusion. He led an impromptu chant: "We. Are. Keller!" Staff: "We. Are. Keller!" Mr. Lewis: "Two more times! [with staff] We. Are. Keller! We. Are. Keller!" Naomi smiled and clapped along with the participants before returning to her presentation.

"How do we create the space to actually use the reflection tool?" she asked. Mr. Rossi, another veteran teacher at the school, shared his thoughts:

> I get my students into the green zone right when they come into the classroom. It's not always an emergency. … We need to be their rock. We have to model emotions for them. There are emergency situations sometimes, like we had someone with a gun on campus, we had a bomb threat. When these things happen, our kids should be able to look to us. Kids learn by example.

Another teacher added, "We have to acknowledge that our students' feelings are valid. 'I see you but I just need a moment to get the class started and I'll come back to you.' We need to show our students that they matter. They're trying to validate their self-worth." Ms. Williams agreed: "As admins we usually think about 'in case of emergency.' We have to learn to appropriately address our students' needs as part of a routine." Alexandra wrapped up the section with a diagram that showed how our thoughts, behaviors, and physiology can affect our emotions; she then recapped the strategies identified by the participants to promote positive thoughts, behaviors, and physical wellness. (When she said it was time for a break, Mr. Lewis said, "We should just keep going. This is great.")

In the next activity, facilitators took the participants outside for a game of "Step to the Line," where facilitators called out different statements and participants had to step up to a line if they agreed. "I'm glad it's summer break." (All stepped up.) "I'm the oldest child in my family." (Some stepped up.) "I attended [the University]." (Some stepped up and high-fived while others playfully booed.) "I know what SELIS stands for." (All.) "I'm glad I work at Keller." (All.) "I know what WAK stands for." (All stepped up and chanted: "We. Are. Keller!") At the end of the activity, Ms. Campbell asked how everyone was feeling: "Good!" "High energy!" She complimented Ms. Green for coming up with interesting statements based on her knowledge of the Keller staff; she then encouraged the staff to use the "Step to the Line" activity to get their students active, engaged, and thinking about their feelings.

The next section asked participants to think about their best selves as individuals, as a team, and as models for their students: "When we bring out the best in ourselves, we can bring out the best in our kids." Ms. Williams asked, "What are we doing to be our best self as a team at Keller?" Participants shared their thoughts: "We

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can support students in and out of the classroom." "We hold each other accountable." "We are committed to our students." "We laugh." "We listen to each other." Ms. Williams then broached a delicate subject: "Are we presenting our best self to the community? When you tell someone that you work at Keller, you might get a look like, 'Are you ok?' So how do we change the perception and present our best self when people come visit us?"

The staff were quick to champion their school. One of the newer teachers shared: "I was proud of our community event this month. It shows the community that we'll come in on the weekend, we're proud of our school, we're not trying to hide, we have things we want to show off." One of the veteran teachers said, "For people who really know our students, they really sing our praises. Our kids are the [expletive]." Another veteran teacher added, "I've always said that Keller is a diamond in the rough." Other staff: "Amen!" Ms. Williams affirmed that Keller's best self is represented by its students and its staff.

After the lunch break—during which participants were invited to participate in creative expression activities like painting or writing haiku poems—Mr. Davis presented the reflection tool in more detail and how to use it as a strategic process for redirecting unhelpful emotions after being triggered by a challenging situation. He asked participants to brainstorm situations in which they should use the reflection tool. Ms. Huang (teacher) shared:

> Getting frustrated in the classroom when I have to repeat instructions, especially for my older kids. I'm getting a little angry even now. But I realize I should use the reflection process and think about maybe they're tired or something. It might be frustrating but it's just part of being a teacher.

Ms. Campbell tied the purpose of the reflection tool back to the theme of the day:

When we react badly to someone or rub someone the wrong way, even our students, it weighs on our shoulders. We think about it at night. … We have to think about how our reactions affect people's impressions of us. We have to use the reflection tool to think about how to be our best selves.

During this discussion, Alexandra was clicking around Ms. Campbell's laptop (connected to the projector) to find and play a video about the SELIS reflection tool. Participants chuckled at the cluttered appearance of her desktop; Ms. Campbell became jokingly defensive: "Everyone has a messy drawer, okay?" Mr. Carter, the principal, responded in kind: "I think you need to use the reflection tool to think about how you're responding to us." Mr. Lewis added teasingly, "Was that the right way to respond just now?" Ms. Campbell laughed and agreed: "You're right, I should use the reflection tool." Similar to the SELIS Center training back in February, participants (even in jest) were able to apply the SELIS tools and concepts to real-life interactions occurring in the SELIS PD.

The facilitators wrapped up the day by sharing examples of SELIS implementation from School A, the community school that hosted the SELIS Center training (Ms. Thompson: "SELIS has been infused into their school"). Participants appeared to be impressed by the photos and stories but also skeptical about replicating these activities and products at Keller. Mr. Rossi shared his concerns:

> I have a lot of ideas for how to include this in my classroom, but how are we going to roll this out schoolwide? Do you introduce it first and we keep the ball rolling? What if I introduce it one way and it's not consistent? I don't want the kids to get burned out on it.

The principal elaborated:

> I think what Mr. Rossi is saying is that we need a floor schoolwide so that kids are receiving the same thing from classroom to classroom. You can take it as far as you want but we need to have a consistent floor you can layer on top of.

The facilitators acknowledged these concerns and explained that the school would first focus on two strategies (the emotion grid and the reflection tool) in the next school year. They then provided practical suggestions for rolling out the SEL tools with students: "Advisory [homeroom] would be the ideal time. First week of school, every day of school we want kids to be learning about SELIS." "The activities that we've been doing today are not fluffy or trivial—these are examples of things you can do with your kids. You also have your own ideas that can be shared because we're all experts." One of the teachers emphasized the use of visual displays of SELIS, suggesting that the ISS Committee put up posters of the emotion grid in classrooms and the auditorium. Ms. Campbell said that if staff created a "mini-lesson" for the emotion grid and the reflection tool, they could send it to her and she would upload it to the shared drive. Ms. Williams agreed that it was important to keep these lessons together so that the staff could share "good-quality resources": "Instead of coming up with five lessons, you can just come up with one and find four more online." Participants seemed to appreciate the idea of a shared repository of SELIS resources.

At the end of the training, participants were asked to complete the staff survey created by the SELIS Support Team. Acknowledging that it had been a long day at the start of summer break, the facilitators thanked the participants and the participants thanked the facilitators for an engaging, productive retreat.

SELIS Implementation Narrative: Year 2

As previously discussed, Year 2 of SELIS implementation is intended to be the first year of implementation with students and families, after a school has dedicated one year to professional development and learning with staff. By the end of Year 1 of implementation at Keller, the ISS Committee had trained the general school staff on

the foundations of SELIS and two of the SEL tools: the emotion grid and the reflection. The committee had also scheduled a fall semester retreat in August (right before the start of the school year) to introduce and train the staff on the emotion and behavior contract, with the intention of creating a school-level contract at the retreat and starting off the new school year with some momentum for SELIS implementation.

During the summer break, there were some staffing changes that directly affected the ISS Committee. Ms. Gutierrez (counselor) had accepted a job at another school within the district. Ms. Thompson (Student Support Team lead) had also accepted a job within the district, although she was still committed to facilitating the August retreat that she had helped plan. After the start of the school year, the ISS Committee would welcome two new members, one of whom was a newly hired teacher. Thus, the group that had facilitated Year 1 of SELIS implementation at Keller was not the same group that would facilitate Year 2 of implementation (Figure 3).

Figure 3. SELIS Implementation Timeline: Year 2
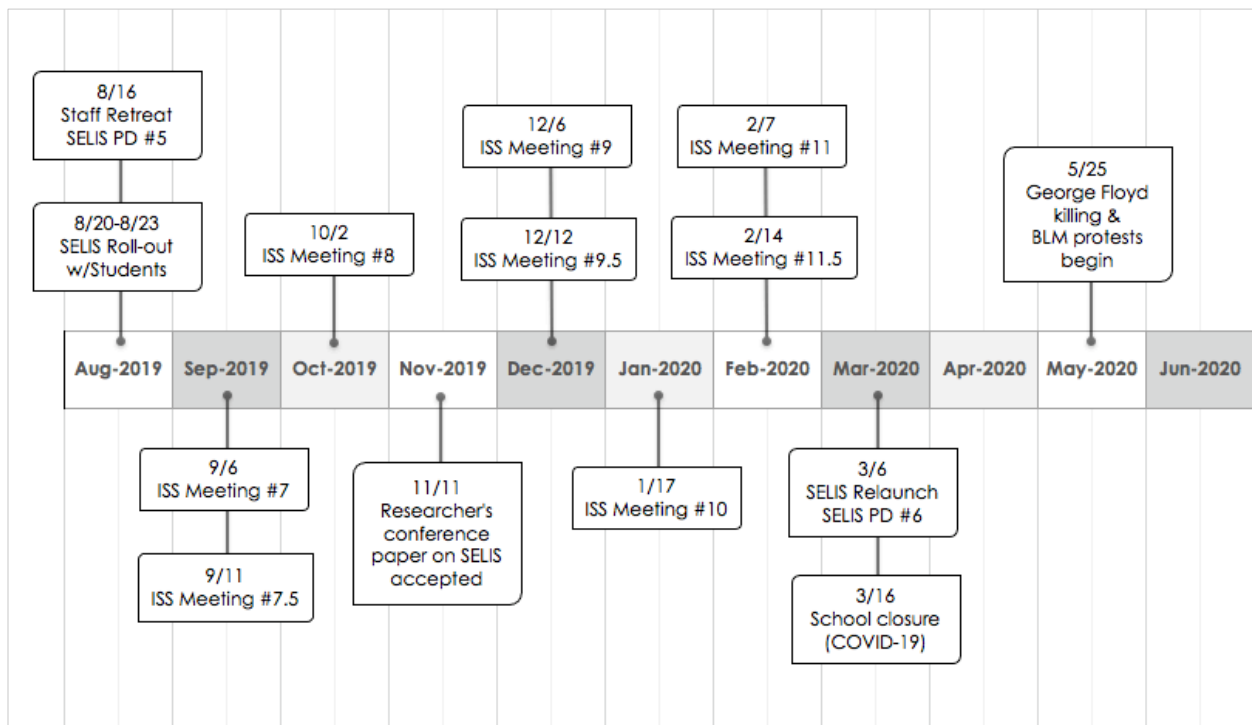
August 2019

Staff Retreat and SELIS PD #5. Although two months had passed since the June retreat, the ISS Committee considered this retreat (August 16) to be the second half of the SELIS PD. The full-day staff retreat (8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.) was once again held off-site at the same local art gallery as before. There were five ISS Committee members and two SELIS Support Team members who presented and facilitated different sections of the PD, with two SELIS Support Team coordinators who participated in activities and helped with administrative tasks. Once again, approximately 20 staff members (including administrators) participated in the retreat.

As people were still arriving and getting breakfast, I checked in with Naomi and Ms. Williams about planning for the retreat. Naomi replied, "[The ISS Committee is] so on top of things. I'm only going to talk a little bit, they have everything else covered. … We had a meeting with all the schools that are doing SELIS, and the other schools are not nearly as organized as Keller. They haven't had something like the ISS team in place until recently." Ms. Williams playfully added, "What did the other school call their contract? We're going to call ours the Keller Pact, it sounds better than contract." The general vibe among ISS Committee members and the rest of the staff was positive and energized for the new school year.

As with the previous retreat, the facilitators started out with a fun meme activity as an icebreaker (particularly helpful for the newly hired staff), a reminder of the norms, and an overview of the objectives: "Identify healthy emotions necessary to create a positive school climate, lay the framework for building a positive culture and climate at Keller, identify essential elements of the SELIS contract tool, and create a schoolwide contract that is sustainable and productive."

Ms. Thompson facilitated the first part of the PD and asked participants to consider the word "culture": "What does culture mean to you?" Guided by facilitators moving around the room, the participants split into groups to brainstorm and then shared their thoughts with the large group: "Diversity." "Similarities." "Belonging." "Customs." "Community." "Food." "Spirit." "Roots." "Beliefs." Ms. Thompson then asked participants to think of words that applied to the culture at Keller: "Youth." "Traditions." "Resistance." One of the teachers shared that the school was often associated with challenging student demographics. Ms. Thompson encouraged participants to embrace the positive aspects of the school and students' culture: "We want to build up a strong culture at Keller and make people in the community aware that things are different now."

In the next activity, Ms. Coleman (restorative justice coach) facilitated a restorative circle. Participants were asked to stand up, gather in a large circle, and take deep calming breaths. Ms. Coleman then revealed a plastic pink heart, a gift from one of her students, to use as a talking piece and pass around. She provided three prompts for participants to answer while holding the talking piece: (1) pick a weather word to describe your current mood, (2) describe your ideal vacation, and (3) describe an experience where you did not fit in. For the third prompt, participants were allowed to pass if they did not wish to answer, but it turned out to be the most engaging topic. Almost every participant shared something deeply personal about their backgrounds, their past experiences, or their current situations; some of the staff teared up while they were speaking. The anecdotes provided many opportunities for staff to affirm and comfort each other. At the end, Ms. Coleman thanked everyone for sharing and reminded them that restorative circles could be powerful tools to use with their students to create a sense of belonging.

After Ms. Williams reviewed the content from the previous PD, Naomi presented on the SELIS contract tool as a way to build a "positive culture and climate" at Keller. In small groups, participants were asked to identify one emotion goal (i.e., how they wanted to feel at Keller) and at least five behaviors that would help them achieve these emotions. Mr. Davis emphasized that the behaviors should be measurable; for example, in order to feel valued, staff should greet each other by name when they pass each other in the halls. In the share-out, the groups explained their emotion goals (excited, joyful, connected, respected, valued) and measurable behaviors (e.g., smile and ask others about their day, give praise and positive affirmation, recognize achievements, make eye contact). Ms. Williams shared the committee's intention to create a schoolwide contract called the Keller Pact, which was intended to be a fluid document that could change from year to year. After the lunch break she read the first draft of the contract to the group:

> The Keller Pact: As a faculty, we want to feel excited, joyful, connected, respected, and valued. In order to feel these things consistently, we will: take time to laugh and joke, actively listen, give praise by telling people we're proud of them, treat others how we want to be treated, and regularly recognize each other's accomplishments.

Participants seemed satisfied with the language of the Keller Pact and enthusiastic about putting it up at the school. One teacher said, "I'm a visual person so can we have this posted somewhere I can see it, like when I'm having my coffee? We should have this posted in common areas."

In the last section of the PD, the ISS Committee shared their plans for the SELIS roll-out with students during the first week of school (August 20-23). The overall intention was to help teachers and staff begin to establish camaraderie and behavioral norms with their students and eventually create classroom-level contracts. The committee had created activities for each grade level to complete during each day of

the week; it had also identified committee members and staff who would facilitate each activity. The staff had many questions about the logistics of coordinating so many events with so many students but were also excited about the roll-out week. Ms. Lin, one of the newer teachers, interrupted the discussion to share: "I just want to say I feel really excited about this activity and bringing the whole school together in this way." As other staff snapped their fingers in agreement, Ms. Williams said, "Aw, I love you," and Ms. Thompson said, "I feel appreciated." One of the veteran teachers added, "I think this is awesome. I think we should take pictures and do a two-page spread in the yearbook." Mr. Davis finished up the section by explaining a few of the roll-out activities (e.g., question web, sentence strips, minefield) in more detail.

At the end of the PD, the facilitators once again thanked the participants for a productive and engaging day. They also took the time to make some final announcements: it was the birthday of one of the teachers (the staff sang "Happy Birthday"), another teacher had just celebrated her 40th wedding anniversary, and it was Ms. Thompson's last official day at Keller. After the PD, the ISS Committee spent some time debriefing with the administrators.

SELIS Roll-out Week: In the first week of the 2019-2020 academic year (August 20-23), the ISS Committee and a selection of teachers and staff facilitated a weeklong series of SELIS-related activities for each grade level. As discussed at the August retreat, these activities were intended as bonding activities between the students and staff; they were also meant to prime the students for SELIS concepts and tools (e.g., behavioral norms and the contract tool). I attended the "minefield" activity that Ms. Campbell facilitated with approximately 70 9th and 10th graders (these two grade levels were grouped together for SELIS activities), supported by a few of the teachers.

The "minefield" was an obstacle course on a grass field that students had to navigate while blindfolded and led by other students; the finish line was a "Congrats Grad" banner held up by the teachers on the other side of the course. (This was meant to symbolize the 9th and 10th graders' journeys toward high school graduation.) The students were somewhat hesitant and embarrassed once they were blindfolded, but they completed the obstacle course with encouragement from Ms. Campbell and the teachers. Once the majority of students completed the course, Ms. Campbell led a debrief and asked students how the activity made them feel. A few students shared their thoughts: "I trusted someone I didn't know." "It made me feel good." "I felt excited to be finished." While the students were speaking, a couple of teachers wrote down their emotion words on a poster board (e.g., safe, included, trust).

Ms. Campbell chose a few of the key emotion words to create a SELIS contract with the students: "You want to feel safe—you can tell each other if you don't feel safe. You can tell your teachers if you don't feel safe. What else can we do to feel safe?" Some of the other teachers jumped in to help guide the conversation: "Included—how can we include everyone?" The students brainstormed a few behaviors to support the emotion words (e.g., don't treat people like outsiders, help out your friends when they need it, communicate with others). At the end of the activity, Ms. Campbell asked students to summarize what the group had talked about: "We talked about feelings and how we want to feel." "We did the minefield activity to build trust and communicate with each other." "See how people feel and some things to do so they can feel safe and included." Ms. Campbell and the teachers thanked the students for doing a great job with the activity and helping to create the contract.

September 2019

ISS Committee Meeting #7. In the first committee meeting (September 6) of the school year, Ms. Williams and the committee welcomed new members Ms. Bailey, a newly hired teacher, and Ms. Coleman, the school's restorative justice coach who had facilitated an activity during the August retreat. The committee quickly jumped back into things with a recap of the SELIS contract activity and the roll-out week of implementing SELIS activities with students. Committee members who were activity leads shared updates on whether they had completed the contracts with their specific grade levels; some had finished their contracts during the roll-out week, some were still finalizing them. The committee agreed to attend the advisory periods for each grade level to review their contracts and poll students on which emotion words resonated with them the most. Ms. Williams hoped that teachers would try to create contracts for their specific classrooms; Mr. Davis shared that one of the 7th grade teachers had already done so.

The committee discussed next steps for continuing the roll-out process. Ms. Williams had created a folder on the school's online portal to share general SELIS resources, but she acknowledged that they still needed to add SELIS lesson plans and activity guides for teachers to use with their students, as discussed at the August retreat. The committee agreed that the contracts needed to be finalized as soon as possible; Ms. Williams wanted to print them out on poster-sized paper and put them up in the common areas around the school. The committee also discussed the need to request more emotion grid posters from the SELIS Support Team.

At the end of the meeting, the committee confirmed their availability for a weekly working meeting in addition to the monthly committee meetings. Mr. Davis emphasized the need for accountability in order to get things done: "We need everyone to be available and present at work meetings." The meeting ended with a lengthy

discussion among teachers, especially Ms. Bailey, about disciplinary and classroom management issues they had encountered in the first few weeks of school.

ISS Committee Meeting #7.5. This was the committee's first weekly working meeting (September 11), scheduled after school due to everyone's busy schedules. At the start of the meeting, Ms. Campbell asked if we needed to add our meeting notes to the internal staff website (recently created by another University GSR to help each committee track their milestones and see what other committees were working on). I responded that meeting notes were just for monthly meetings and that our committee was probably the only one with a weekly meeting. Ms. Williams laughed and said, "That's right! Add that to the website, Evelyn—ISS is the most high-functioning committee." She turned to Ms. Bailey, who was still learning the ropes with the committee: "Ms. Bailey, we work in chaos but we get the job done." The new teacher laughed and said, "No complaints from me." Ms. Williams added, "We're like a family here. We will joke about you and laugh about you and support you."

The committee checked in again about the grade-level contracts and wanting to get them typed up and distributed as soon as possible. Mr. Davis shared that he might need some help getting his done with the 7th graders, a particularly large group. Ms. Williams was antsy to get the contracts done and figure out what to do next; she shared that Naomi had reached out to offer support with next steps, but she was not sure how to respond. Ms. Campbell reassured the others that Keller was doing really well with implementation, especially compared to another local school that was also using SELIS ("We're way ahead of them"). Ms. Williams took a moment to assess:

> It's a lot of work. We went really hard and fast at the start, that's why we're tired and frustrated, but now we should pull back and focus on some maintenance things. Like giving teachers emotion grid activities to introduce it to their students, who haven't had a formal introduction yet. Really our work has been with the teachers, so we need to provide some direction for students.

Ms. Green shared that a few of the newer teachers were already using SELIS with their students, but most teachers needed more guidance. The committee agreed to find more resources to upload to the shared drive.

Ms. Williams suggested that they start thinking about rolling out the emotion grid with students next, once the contracts were completed. The committee did not want to wait until the next committee meeting (October 4) to meet with teachers about implementing the grid; they did not want to lose the momentum from the roll-out week. Looking at their PD calendars, the committee tried to figure out if there was space for them to conduct another SELIS PD at the end of September. Ms. Green then suggested that they ask the SELIS Support Team for lesson plans that could be sustained across the semester. Ms. Williams addressed the main challenge she had been facing with SELIS implementation:

> We can ask but I don't think that exists, activities for 10 weeks. … SELIS is not a set curriculum, it's a philosophy. They don't give you 5 lessons or activities for being your best self. We have to just keep SELIS in our frame of reference when we teach. Teachers are expected to incorporate SELIS into their lesson plans, but they may not have time. We as the ISS team have to give teachers some suggestions, maybe by incorporating some activities from [middle school SEL curriculum]. SELIS only gives some ideas which are available, but they're not like 15-, 20-minute activities that we can do during advisory.

At the end of the meeting, the committee agreed to finalize the grade-level contracts in the next week—i.e., they would be typed up and uploaded to the shared drive for staff to print out and share. Ms. Williams suggested that as a next step, the committee could put together some SELIS activity baskets to give to teachers. The committee agreed that it was a good idea and started suggesting items that could be included in the baskets; Ms. Campbell mentioned that they could get the actual baskets from Dollar Tree. Ms. Bailey then asked if Keller could get additional training or resources from the SELIS Center; Ms. Williams responded, "SELIS training was gifted to

us. Not everyone was trained, we're just pooling our expertise. Naomi is our guide in our interpretation of implementing SELIS." The meeting ended with a plan to get together in two weeks to put together the activity baskets.

On my way out of the school, I walked down the hallway right next to the front office and saw that one of the extra-large bulletin boards had been covered with a giant emotion grid made out of color construction paper, along with large letters arranged vertically (S-E-L-I-S) next to what each letter stood for (Social and Emotional Learning In Schools). I would find out at the next ISS meeting that it had been created by Ms. Blake, the school's academic intervention coordinator; by February 2020, the emotion grid would be covered with Polaroids labeled with different emotions ("chill," "joyful," "proud," "concerned," "mopey") and showing students acting them out, each placed within the appropriate color of the grid.

October 2019

ISS Committee Meeting #8. As of the second committee meeting of the school year (October 2), the ISS team was still working on finishing all the grade-level contracts. Mr. Miller and Ms. Campbell had placed an order for materials that teachers could check out for SELIS activities. (The activity baskets were also still in progress.) Ms. Williams and Mr. Miller were reaching out to the SELIS Support Team to get more emotion grid posters and make sure all the teachers had one in their classrooms. Ms. Williams was intent on creating a series of brief SELIS lessons that could be embedded in teachers' lesson plans, as well as a month-long implementation plan on the four SEL tools. The committee planned to review the student contracts by October 14, introduce students to the emotion grid by October 21, and introduce the reflection tool and the conflict resolution plan by the end of November.

Additionally, Ms. Campbell added this ISS Committee update to the internal staff website:

> In September, we were able to create a design for the 6th grade contract, have students vote on the design, and continue to use the class name "Cubs" for themselves. September was also a very busy month with relationship building with students. In addition, Keller lost one teacher so another teacher needed to take over a different grade level than he'd had before. Therefore, for most of September, the team focused on working hands-on with students: getting their new schedules hammered out, making calls home, having student conferences, conflict resolution, and building solid relationships.

November 2019

ISS Committee Meeting #9: The third monthly committee meeting of the school year (November 1) was canceled for an emergency faculty meeting. Later in the day, I checked in with Ms. Williams in her office. "It's been so crazy the last few months," she shared. In terms of the SELIS implementation, she said that the committee had been wanting to check in with staff and students and inform them that SELIS is going to "relaunch" in January, but "we haven't really had a chance to check in with them and no one has really come to us to check in." She also mentioned that Naomi had e-mailed her again to offer support, and she wanted to respond with some concrete updates about next steps.

Ms. Williams then suggested that we create a brief, informal survey to check in with staff, although she emphasized that it should not feel evaluative at this early stage of implementing SELIS with students. She wanted to include an open-ended item where staff could write down suggestions for how the ISS Committee could better support them with the implementation ("This is really the most important item, this will help the ISS team the most"). I was immediately excited about the idea, and we arranged to meet on the following Wednesday to design the survey. We planned to

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share it at the next ISS Committee meeting (November 6) and administer it with staff sometime in December.

On my way out, Ms. Williams also informed me about an upcoming school event—Patrisse Cullors, an activist and co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement, had been invited by Ms. Bailey and the administrators to come to Keller and conduct workshops with the students. They hoped that Ms. Cullors could share her story and help students feel more connected to their identities, self-worth, and community. "It's not SELIS but it's SELIS-like," Ms. Williams said, making the connection between social-emotional supports and providing students with culturally relevant and social justice-oriented experiences (Jones et al., 2021). After Ms. Cullors visited the school, Ms. Bailey also acknowledged the importance of engaging students in social justice issues and promoting their sense of identity, advocacy, and self-efficacy.

Conference Paper on SELIS Implementation at Keller. My paper submission on the implementation of an SEL intervention at a community school was accepted by a national educational research conference. I planned to share this news and a final version of the paper with the ISS Committee at the next monthly meeting.

December 2019

ISS Committee Meeting #9. The committee's third monthly meeting of the school year, originally scheduled for November, took place on December 6. Ms. Williams started the meeting off by saying, "We didn't do the things we wanted to do since the first semester was so crazy—I want to reset in the next semester."

Having brought the 7th graders' unfinished contract to the meeting, Mr. Davis laid the poster paper out on a table and asked for help. The committee worked together to help him identify measurable outcomes and behaviors for each of the emotion goals, while also commenting on the 7th graders' behavior in general. ("The 7th

graders have been so bombastic. They need to be reminded about respect." "They're dealing with a lot of hormones." "They've been crazy this semester. They really needed this contract.") Once the behaviors were finalized, Mr. Davis put the poster paper away and said, "I'm so glad that's done. It's been hanging over me for months."

I then shared the ISS Committee updates and SELIS milestones that I had added to Keller's internal staff website. "I like that," Ms. Williams said. "If the principal asks me what we're up to, I can show him what we've done. I feel like our committee does a lot compared to some of the other committees." (This was a different sentiment than what she shared at the start of the meeting, and I was glad that my summary showed all the progress the committee had actually made with the SELIS implementation.) I also shared the news about my conference paper getting accepted and confirmed that I would upload it to the ISS Committee's shared drive. Mr. Davis and Ms. Campbell requested copies for themselves.

The rest of the meeting was concerned with "resetting" for January and not overwhelming the teachers with SELIS implementation. Mr. Davis shared: "I feel defeated sometimes. I feel like there are only a few of us doing the work. Ms. Campbell is doing so much of the work, like she did so much of the planning for the first week. And Ms. Williams, you do a lot of work too as an administrator." Ms. Campbell pointed out that the ISS team had changed a lot and that it was hard to lose Ms. Thompson and Ms. Gutierrez. Mr. Davis agreed, adding, "Others need to be more committed. Even the school needs to be more committed. … Okay, I'm done complaining." Ms. Williams quickly responded:

> No but it's totally valid and I agree with you. Everyone is overworked, I'm overworked. … I want to help address problems. Teachers were complaining that they need Adobe so they can edit documents, and I'm like, "That's it? I can take care of that!" That's a small thing that I can take care of. I just get

frustrated when things are small but then snowball into something huge and people are frustrated. Just tell me when you have a problem.

The discussion then shifted to the difficulties that some of the teachers were having with their students and the restorative justice circles; the committee shared their concerns that teachers were either not implementing social-emotional supports appropriately or not implementing social-emotional supports at all. Ms. Williams shared a specific example where SELIS could have been helpful:

> You need team building within each period. Not every teacher has a contract for each class, but sometimes you need to stop and check in with students and talk about things like, how do we work together as a team? We can't just default to normal detention, which we've been doing since the beginning of time. I saw some teachers doing a group detention, but SELIS was not important at all. It was coming from a place of negative punishment. It could have been a SELIS teachable moment, but we had so much on our plates that we couldn't respond to it properly, and the teachers didn't have SELIS in their tool belts.

With the intention of setting some goals for January, the committee decided to schedule one more planning meeting before the holiday break, for at least an hour and a half ("An hour is never enough"). After the meeting, Ms. Williams surprised me with a pile of completed staff surveys (SELIS mid-year check-in) that she had administered at a recent PD. I promised to have a report ready at the next meeting.

ISS Committee Meeting #9.5. At the planning meeting (December 12), I shared the results from the SELIS staff survey administered in November. Most teachers had only implemented SELIS with their students once or twice since the beginning of the school year, and about a third still were not sure what the SEL tools were. In particular, teachers specifically mentioned that they wanted more ideas of activities to do during advisory, and a majority of teachers (83%) said they wanted more support from the ISS team on implementing SELIS. The committee agreed that assisting teachers with SELIS activities during advisory made the most sense.

The grade-level contracts were almost completed, and Ms. Williams wanted Mr. Miller to find some money in the budget to print out the contracts as posters and laminate them at Kinko's. Mr. Davis also suggested that the school have some kind of ceremony as a celebration of the students' ideas and their commitment to the contracts ("It needs to be a re-introduction to the contract and the SELIS activities"). Mr. Davis shared another idea: "We need to come out with our SELIS shirts. We need to come out strong." Ms. Williams agreed but pointed out, "That's what happened at the beginning of the year. That's what we did in the first week, we came out strong, but then we fell off. I don't want that to happen again." The committee agreed that because the June retreat was so long ago, they needed to re-introduce the reflection tool with the staff and then show them how to implement it with their students.

To frame the January reset, Ms. Williams wrote out a list titled "ISS Wish List/To Do List." She vented a bit about feeling frustrated about all the work to be done and certain committee members not showing up to ISS meetings, but she then made a point to "wrap up 2019 on a positive note." The committee members then worked together to identify key goals for January: (1) initiate contracts (all grade levels) in January, (2) celebration of commitment (contracts) in February, (3) teacher sign-ups for advisory sessions in February, and (4) introduce the reflection tool with students by the end of February.

The committee also plotted out the monthly committee meetings for the rest of the school year (January to May) and tentative SELIS topics for each one. "Maybe we do need more members," Ms. Williams said as she wrote out the meeting dates and topics on the whiteboard. "What do you think, Evelyn?" I responded, "Maybe we need five strong leads, one per grade level." Mr. Davis added, "We need someone committed." The committee discussed a few staff members who could potentially be recruited for

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ISS; the conversation then shifted to some of the students they had been having trouble with recently.

January 2020

ISS Committee Meeting #10. Coming back from the holiday break, the committee met had their fourth monthly meeting of the school year (January 17). Attendance was much better at this meeting than the last one in December. Ms. Williams shared an update that Naomi was still in touch and wanted to support with PDs but that Alexandra had transitioned out of the SELIS Support Team and would be replaced by a new coach. She then reviewed the ISS Wish List/To Do List for January that was created at the last meeting: (1) initiate contracts (all grade levels) in January, (2) celebration of commitment (contracts) in February, (3) teacher sign-ups for advisory sessions in February, and (4) introduce the reflection tool with students by the end of February.

The committee discussed scheduling the official roll-out of the grade-level contracts for later in the month (one of the contracts was still unfinished). They soon realized that they needed reminding about who was leading each grade level's contract, the status of each contract, whether they had the contracts in paper or photographic form. Nonetheless, everyone was interested in getting the contracts professionally made into posters.

Ms. Williams wanted to get Naomi's help in developing lesson plans to co-facilitate with teachers and students; Naomi had offered to send over some materials for SELIS activities and to review the materials together. Ms. Williams added, "I don't know if they're online or on paper. We can help the teachers co-teach a lesson and support them that way. The good thing is we don't have to create the lessons ourselves which we were on our way to doing, but it was going to take a bunch of time." She asked committee members when they might be available to meet with Naomi; there

was a general chorus of which days were not good, afternoons were generally better than mornings, and other potential conflicts.

For SELIS-adjacent updates, the committee discussed the new girls club where they went over social-emotional competencies and skills. Ms. Coleman pointed out that the school could use a boys club, and others suggested that Mr. Carter (principal) could possibly lead it. The committee also discussed the upcoming Black History Month assembly; Ms. Campbell and Ms. Bailey were in charge of working with students to put the assembly together. Ms. Campbell asked, "Should we squeeze something SELIS-related into the assembly?" Ms. Williams suggested picking some 7th graders (i.e., some of the more challenging students) to participate in some kind of SELIS activity. Ms. Bailey agreed: "We need to give them something to unify around. They're all over the place but they're really good kids. They're going through their stuff. I tell them they're some of my favorite people on campus." Ms. Williams elaborated on the general student population at Keller:

> We want them to have fun, we want them to be kids. We just need to give them boundaries. … I want them to have school spirit. I want them to come to school and think of this place as a warm place. Kids don't know how to be kids. … It helps us too. When they're happier, it makes it easier for us to teach them. They don't want to be disgruntled and unhappy, they want to be happy.

The committee wrapped up the meeting in good spirits, feeling productive and having more clarity on next steps with the SELIS implementation.

February 2020

ISS Committee Meeting #11. At the fifth monthly meeting of the school year (February 7), the committee met Catherine, the new SELIS Support coordinator who had replaced Alexandra. Ms. Williams shared that she had met with Catherine and Naomi a few days before, and they had showed her how to navigate SELIS's online platform and

find the SELIS lesson plans for middle school students. (She had her laptop connected to the projector and was projecting the online platform as she scrolled through and clicked around.) It was possible that her previous complaints about the SELIS program not having lesson plans available was due to her unfamiliarity with the platform, but in any case, she was very pleased with the lesson plans and excited for the committee to review them. "I think teachers will be happy to receive these lessons and it gives them something visual to look at and use," she said, then asked, "What do you guys think? What is your first response?" Ms. Bailey was relieved: "I'm glad it exists, versus us building from scratch."

Ms. Williams spent much of the meeting clicking on lesson plans for different grade level and topics, giving the committee time to scan through the content. She suggested that Ms. Bailey, who had not attended the official SELIS training, review a few of the modules to catch up on SELIS concepts. Ms. Bailey agreed and also offered to look over the lesson plans over the weekend and test them out with her elective classes on the following Monday. (Ms. Williams joked, "Can we tape you?") Ms. Green volunteered to attend those classes and assist Ms. Bailey with implementation, while Catherine offered her technical assistance. Ms. Williams provided some additional guidance for Ms. Bailey's exploration of the online platform and lesson plans:

> Not to give you homework, but as you go through it, just be reflective. You're going in green because you weren't here when we first launched last year. It'd be great to know what you think of these materials since you didn't have the same PDs as the other teachers. It'll be good to know what you can get from this. It'll be a good testament to how the website can be used.

At the end of the meeting, the committee scheduled an additional working meeting for the following Friday to prepare for the March 6th SELIS PD (or "relaunch") with staff. The committee was also looking forward to hearing updates from Ms. Bailey and Ms. Green about the pilot lessons with Ms. Bailey's elective classes.

ISS Committee Meeting #11.5. The planning meeting (February 14) started on a low note when Ms. Bailey and Ms. Green shared that the SELIS pilot lesson did not go as well as they had hoped. Ms. Green thought the students were not very engaged, as if they felt the SELIS lesson had come out of nowhere. (Ms. Williams: "It might've been different if the students had been doing SELIS activities throughout the year.") Ms. Bailey offered more insights:

> First of all, it was a Monday, you know what I mean? Also, the videos couldn't really play very well, they kept lagging. They were embedded from the website. I couldn't play them and it took a lot of time just to try to fix them. And once our kids have a moment to get distracted… Also, the lesson plans weren't exactly ready to go. I still spent hours this weekend creating a PowerPoint and combing through the website, navigating the site, figuring out where to start first, putting information into a PowerPoint that would make sense to our students and teachers. It would be great if the SELIS platform would just have PowerPoints ready to go, I could just pull it up on the website and get started with the students.

Ms. Williams felt that Ms. Bailey should share her PowerPoint lesson with the staff at the upcoming SELIS PD. Ms. Bailey ultimately agreed: "I think the lesson is fine. The problem was mostly that we started on Monday and the technology issues."

In the interest of time, Ms. Williams had already created an agenda for the PD: welcome, opening activity, refresher of SELIS concepts that were already covered with staff, online platform, group activity to use online platform and provide feedback, a share-out, and a sign-up for teachers who want advisory support with SELIS. The committee discussed whether it was more appropriate to implement these lessons during advisory or content classes. Ms. Bailey felt that the advisory periods were too short and that the general atmosphere of advisory periods was not conducive to teaching a lesson ("We haven't set the precedent for it. Right now advisories are just whatever the teachers want them to be"). Ms. Williams responded:

Advisory was always something that was meant to be structured. Like how SELIS is structured with these lesson plans. … Advisory was never supposed to be, "Free to be me, do whatever for 30 minutes." It's become that, but it was never supposed to be. It always had a purpose, so why it's being used for random—for different stuff is another conversation. We've had advisories for leadership students, for teachers with SPED [special education] students. This is an opportunity for us to have that conversation with teachers—we have to make sure that advisories are being used appropriately.

The committee agreed that it was important to share Ms. Bailey's PowerPoint slides as a lesson plan template for teachers. (Mr. Davis: "The teachers don't have to reinvent the wheel, they can use the PowerPoint that Ms. Bailey created so they already have it ready.") Ms. Bailey agreed to frame the lesson plan around the advisory periods and keep the activities as simple as possible. She also shared specific feedback with Catherine about the utility of the SELIS online platform (e.g., needs a video gallery, embedded links don't work, needs videos tailored for younger kids); Catherine said she would e-mail the SELIS Center about making these improvements.

At the end of the meeting, the committee got into a critical discussion about whether it was too late in the school year to be relaunching SELIS:

> "It will help the teachers establish what kind of environment they want in their classroom," said one committee member.
> "Isn't it a little late to establish an environment? It's already March," said another member.
> "It's never too late. You have to constantly try to establish, even if it never happens."
> One of the members became visibly frustrated. "The way we started this year was crazy. We had classes with 50 kids, kids with IEPs, with just one teacher. We had fights breaking out. If you have IEPs, usually at least you have an aide. It's taken some time to get out of that. Thinking from that perspective, we have to think about what the teachers started with. … We've all been trying. There was a lot of chaos, and there's still some chaos, but teachers are trying and have been trying. It might still be a little chaotic in some classrooms, but we should have patience for what they're doing with their students."
> The skeptical committee member still had concerns: "Yeah, what I'm saying is, it's been crazy all year, and now it's March, and now we want to establish a calm

classroom? Like if we do the PD in March, when do they start doing SELIS? Like a month later?"

One member was optimistic. "They can start doing it immediately."

Another articulated an ongoing concern. "I just don't want teachers to think of SELIS as a drive-by PD, and now we're moving on to the next thing."

"The important thing is for all the teachers to do the same thing at the same time. We all need to do the same activities."

For the most part, the committee members were hopeful that the upcoming PD would get the teachers and staff back on the same page about the SELIS roll-out and demonstrate that SELIS was not a "drive-by PD."

March 2020

SELIS PD #6. The SELIS PD on March 6 was intended as a "relaunch" for the SELIS implementation at Keller and rebuild momentum with the staff. The last two SELIS PDs were full-day staff retreats; the duration of this PD was the standard 90 minutes. Four ISS Committee members took the lead with presenting and facilitating sections of the PD. Ms. Campbell first led the staff in an icebreaker activity called "Emotion Ocean." Ms. Williams then provided an overview of the agenda, the SELIS PD timeline, and a review of the SELIS tools ("We've gone over three of the four SEL tools that we can use to address emotions. We've used the emotion grid, the contract, and the reflection, but we haven't used the conflict resolution plan yet").

Ms. Bailey then shared her PowerPoint presentation of a SELIS lesson for 7th graders; the slides included an overview of SELIS concepts, the emotion grid, a linked SELIS video from the developer's website, reflection prompts ("How do emotions influence my day-to-day life?"), and a SELIS activity ("think about a day in your life" and draw in emotions for different scenarios during the day). She shared some insights about using the online platform to find lesson plans, activities, and videos. In

particular, Ms. Bailey explained how she used the SELIS activity to guide her students' thinking about how their emotions change throughout the day:

> I used this to explain to my students that sometimes I feel exhausted and happy at the same time. Students did a great job with this, they really used this to talk about their emotions. There were some struggles with this particular class because they're more active, but I was able to model the activity for them. The following activity was like a gallery walk where they got up and walked around and shared their pictures with other students. This is how I conceptualized this activity for "A Day in the Life." You can do it different ways and use different elements of technology, but this is how I did it.

Some of the staff took photos of Ms. Bailey's slides as she presented. When she finished her presentation, Ms. Williams said, "You can see that Ms. Bailey put a lot of work into this." The staff loudly agreed and applauded.

For the next activity, Ms. Williams asked staff to review a sample lesson plan, break down the four components, and identify quotes, key concepts, or interesting points. Participants were divided into groups and assigned one section of the lesson plan: instructional plan, reflection, application, and closing. The ISS Committee members floated around the room and guided the group discussions. In the share-out, staff discussed what components were most useful and considered how to merge these components into one lesson plan for students.

In the final activity, Ms. Williams sent out the link to SELIS's online platform and helped the participants register and create their own accounts. She then guided them through the process of navigating the elementary, middle, and high school sections in order to find the lesson plans, activity guides, and other SELIS resources. Ms. Williams ended by encouraging staff to explore the platform on their own time: "If there's something in particular that you enjoy, you should hit the 'Favorites' button so there's a bank of resources that you can come back to. … So what SELIS was able to deliver, what we've been asking for, are these materials and resources."

The PD ended with the school's Electives Committee sharing social-emotional supports (e.g., yoga, mindfulness programming) that could be aligned with ISS and SELIS activities in promoting student and staff wellness. Ms. Campbell and Ms. Bailey then dashed off to the auditorium to prepare for the next period's Black History Month assembly. The rest of the committee quickly debriefed and felt that the staff were generally positive about the relaunch.

School Closure due to COVID-19. On March 16, ten days after the SELIS PD, Keller's campus was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and health and safety protocols. As the school underwent an especially challenging transition to distance learning, the faculty and staff were tasked with addressing basic student needs (e.g., laptops, internet access, lunches) while maintaining quality instruction and social-emotional supports. There were no formal ISS Committee or SELIS activities for the rest of the school year.

Conclusion

As should be expected for any new schoolwide intervention, the first two years of the SELIS implementation at Keller-University Community School were eventful, nonlinear, and subject to many extenuating circumstances (Rimm-Kauffman et al., 2007; Sugai & Horner, 2006). While the ISS Committee and its support system initially had every intention of rolling out SELIS according to the developer's intervention model, the actual implementation process was characterized by cycles of increased momentum, stalled progress, and strategic reassessment to get back on track. Nonetheless, despite some misalignment with the developer's prescribed timeline and some unfortunate timing of external disruptions, the narrative also makes clear that the school achieved tremendous success and intervention milestones throughout the

implementation period. The next chapter presents a methodical investigation of implementation quality as the outcome of interest and aims to provide a greater understanding of the specific intervention components and contextual factors that had the greatest impact on the SELIS implementation.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLEMENTATION QUALITY IN CONTEXT

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the present study was guided by a conceptual framework for evaluating implementation quality of school-based interventions in the context of individual-, school-, and macro-level factors (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Consideration of the intervention's implementation quality must occur in two parts: (1) assessing implementation quality by assessing the quality of the intervention components and the support system components, and (2) assessing implementation quality by assessing the influence of contextual factors. As chronicled in a detailed timeline and narrative, the multi-layered implementation of the SELIS intervention at Keller-University Community School served as an "information-rich" case in which the intervention, support system, and contextual factors could be assessed as significant influences on implementation quality.

Implementation Quality: Intervention and Support System

As previously discussed, the implementation of an intervention is comprised of the intervention model itself and the corresponding support system; thus, the overall quality of implementation is directly linked to the implementation quality of the intervention model and the support system model (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Each implementation component has three key features (core elements, standardization, and delivery), and the quality of each implementation component can be assessed on the adherence of these key features (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Program adherence, as a measure of implementation quality, is characterized by fidelity (the degree to which an intervention and its support system are conducted as planned), dosage (specific units

of an intervention and support system), and quality of delivery (Dane & Schneider, 1998; Dusenbury et al., 2005).

Implementation Quality of Intervention Model

Core Elements

The SELIS intervention model focuses on a set of fundamental social-emotional competencies that align closely with CASEL's SEL Framework (2020b) and emotional intelligence theory (Salovey & Mayer, 1990); these competencies are taught and developed through a set of SEL tools: the contract (an emotion and behavior contract), the grid (a color-coded emotion grid), the reflection (a strategic reflection process), and the plan (a conflict resolution plan). The SEL tools are designed to demonstrate SELIS competencies and facilitate SELIS activities but are not embedded in a prescriptive curriculum for practitioners to follow. Instead, a guiding principle of the SELIS program is that it is intended to be implemented and adapted in a way that responds to each school's particular population, culture, and climate, thus promoting more positive outcomes for students and staff. While the program does provide lesson plans, they are meant to be used as guides to support educators in developing their own lesson plans and incorporating SELIS concepts into existing curricula.

Implementation Quality of Core Elements. In terms of fidelity, Keller often struggled in its implementation of the core elements of SELIS. While the SEL concepts were accessible and relevant to the student population—"the concepts are 100% what we need"—the ISS Committee and the general staff did not always have the capacity to implement the SEL tools and lessons as conceived by the developer. The SEL tools used by the school (emotion grid, contract, and reflection) were easier to adopt when SELIS provided ready-to-go materials (e.g., classroom posters of the emotion grid sent directly to the school, developer-made videos on the online platform demonstrating

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the reflection tool), but tools that required more time and resources (e.g., having to allocate money in the budget to print and laminate poster-sized contracts) were a work-in-progress throughout the implementation period. After putting in a great deal of time and effort to draft the staff contract (Keller Pact) and grade-level student contracts, the ISS Committee felt it was important to promote ownership among staff and students by getting the contracts professionally printed; however, the logistical and financial hassles meant that staff and students did not see the fruits of their labor during the implementation period. (The school closure in March 2020 obviously had an impact as well.) The enthusiasm and buy-in generated during the staff retreat and student roll-out week ("Can we have [the Keller Pact] posted somewhere I can see it, like when I'm having my coffee? We should have it posted in common areas") were difficult to maintain without incorporating the contracts into the visual landscape at the school in a timely manner.

In terms of lessons and activities for using the SEL tools, Keller was more familiar with and better suited to a more straightforward and prescriptive curricula (e.g., the district's middle school SEL curriculum that came in an easy-to-use binder with weekly lesson plans). SELIS was initially presented as a framework rather than a curriculum; however, the online platform did include manuals, lesson plans, visual displays, and other instructional materials that were tailored to each grade level. As shared by Ms. Williams, the discovery of lessons plans in particular came as a relief:

> Initially, there was not like a definite set of materials, or, you know, when you think about a curriculum, you think about, you know, you've got all these pieces that work together that help you deliver lessons. I think initially we didn't necessarily have all of those pieces, we just kind of had a framework of, you know, a way of thinking or a way of moving when it came to social-emotional learning. Now though, there are more of those curriculum pieces, there are lessons. … I met with Catherine and Rose [SELIS coaches] and they showed me

the website with middle school lessons. The lessons look really good, they should help get us to where we want to get with those learners.

However, the sheer amount of content felt overwhelming to the ISS Committee as they struggled to customize SELIS's instructional materials into streamlined, accessible resources for the general staff. Ms. Bailey pointed out that while she understood the appeal of a customizable SEL curriculum, this approach may not have been appropriate for an under-resourced school serving high-needs students where teachers and staff are already overworked:

> At a school with a lot of support, at of school with kids who generally are from affluent areas with not a lot of the type of trauma we experience—I'm not gonna say they don't have trauma, because we know they be having trauma too, where their trauma just might look different. Maybe it's a quieter trauma, right. But I feel like the trauma we have [at Keller] is very loud and a very disruptive type of trauma. And so I think with that type of trauma, it takes a lot of energy. We just don't have extra time. So maybe SELIS worked in, like, nice, pristine environments where it was already—like, you know what I'm saying? And it's not that it wouldn't work in our place. I just think that, you know, you can't give a teacher who's already drowning a lesson plan that looks like this and expect the same results.

The incongruency between the intended use of SELIS materials and what would be most appropriate for an environment like Keller did in fact require a considerable amount of customization, and at Keller this was a bug and not a feature. For example, the lesson plans provided by SELIS were designed as 45-minute lessons, while Keller wanted to establish a norm of teachers implementing 15-minute lessons during their advisory periods. The lesson plans were also long and text-heavy; in order to adapt the lessons into short, visually appealing, multimedia PowerPoint presentations that could be easily shared with teachers to use with students, ISS Committee members would have had to invest hours of work per lesson plan, unit, and grade level. After Ms. Bailey's initial experience with adapting a 7th grade lesson plan, it was unclear who else

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among the ISS Committee or the teachers would have taken on this labor-intensive and time-consuming project. Ms. Bailey elaborated on the ISS Committee's dilemma between wanting to support the teachers in every aspect of SELIS implementation but not having the capacity or time to do so:

> How do we get these concepts of SELIS, which is 100% what we need, okay, because it is—the regulating, the labeling, everything. How do we get all that, that we need, into the teachers', you know, into their hands? You know, we have to do it through a series of advisory lessons. And the advisory lessons need to be written by us, by the ISS team. And I honestly think that it needs to be given by us, too. Okay, so I think what it should be is we have advisory, we go in, we have our lessons, we're the ones who give the lessons to the kids, and the teacher is also included, you know, and then the teacher and the students can maybe have their component later that they talk about, you know. But I just think that it has to be way easier to use at a school like Keller. I think it can be successful, but I think that the ISS team—it was hard for us, because every single ISS person wore different hats.

Due to the incongruency between SELIS materials and practical use at Keller—and the ISS Committee's limited capacity and time to address these issues—the core elements of the intervention model were challenging to implement as intended, both in the manner of their use and the implementation timeline. While the recommended timeline is meant to be adjustable for each school's needs, the ISS Committee often used these benchmarks to track their progress and felt that they were behind schedule ("Isn't it too late? … If we do the PD in March, when do [teachers] start doing SELIS? Like a month later?"). Even after 15 ISS Committee meetings and 6 SELIS PDs across two years of implementation—a considerable achievement even before considering the school closure in Year 2— Keller had not yet rolled out the conflict resolution plan (the last of the four SEL tools) with either staff or students.

Standardization

Standardization of core elements is defined as "the specification or documentation of the core components of school-based interventions" (Domitrovich et

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al., 2008). The SELIS program provides educators and practitioners with detailed manuals, lesson plans, visual displays, and other instructional materials on SELIS concepts, tools, and activities; these materials are tailored for each grade level across elementary, middle, and high school and can be accessed through an online platform for educators.

Implementation Quality of Standardization. Program standardization has been found to be positively related to implementation quality (Payne et al., 2006). In terms of standardization for the SELIS program, the SELIS Center is the main source for program training, instructional materials, and resources; it also controls the online platform through which educators and practitioners can access SELIS content. As such, SELIS content should be consistent across all platforms.

Delivery

Per Domitrovich and colleagues (2008), the delivery strategy of an intervention is defined in terms of its duration, frequency, timing, mode of delivering core elements, and delivery agents responsible for implementing the intervention. For the purpose of this bounded case study, the duration of the initial implementation period was two academic years (2018-2019 to 2019-2020). The SELIS program recommends a gradual roll-out of SELIS lessons in the first implementation year with students, with a frequency of approximately 2 lessons per week. In terms of timing, the SELIS implementation model includes one year of professional development and learning for educators before expanding to student and family engagement in the second year. The program's mode of delivery is flexible; educators may choose to use stand-alone lesson plans or an infused approach where SELIS is incorporated into existing curricula. Finally, the intended delivery agents for SELIS are a school's own teachers and staff rather than external specialists; a small implementation team of delivery agents is

trained by the SELIS Center, and then the implementation team trains the general school staff to become delivery agents.

Implementation Quality of Delivery. In terms of dosage, it is difficult to quantify the number of SELIS lessons delivered, the frequency of SELIS lessons, or the number of hours of contact that students had with SELIS. There were no evaluation protocols put in place to regularly collect these data from teachers during the implementation period, and classroom implementation with students had yet to be formalized as of March 2020—i.e., the ISS Committee was still working on establishing a norm for teachers to facilitate SELIS lessons during advisory periods on a regular basis. Based on the mid-year staff survey in November 2019, 50% of survey respondents ($n = 12$; all teachers) indicated that they had used SELIS with their students at least once or twice, 17% sometimes used SELIS with students, 8% frequently used SELIS with students, 17% always used SELIS with students, and 8% had never used SELIS with students. (Note: The self-report survey was made anonymous so that respondents would feel more comfortable about being honest in their responses.) The students also received at least five hours of SELIS content during the SELIS Roll-out Week in the fall of 2019.

Dosage also pertains to duration and timing of the implementation (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Research indicates that a systemic intervention usually takes three to five years to reach high-quality implementation and achieve desired outcomes (Rimm-Kauffman et al., 2007; Sugai & Horner, 2006); since Keller had only undergone the first two years of implementation during the timeframe for this case study, it is reasonable to expect that the school had not yet achieved high-quality implementation and desired outcomes (e.g., increased social-emotional competencies directly attributable to the SELIS intervention). (It should be noted that the scope of this study did not include outcomes measures for social-emotional competencies due to the early

implementation stage, but this is certainly an avenue for future research or program evaluations of SELIS at Keller.) In terms of timing, the school was mostly able to adhere to the implementation timeline suggested by the developer; the staff was almost completely trained on SELIS concepts and SEL tools by the end of Year 2 of implementation, and the students had been at least introduced to three SEL tools (contract, emotion grid, reflection) by the end of Year 2.

Finally, quality of delivery is expressed through the mode of delivery (standard or infused into existing curricula and practices) and the intervention's delivery agents. There is limited evidence on whether standard or infused delivery is more effective in achieving desired effects (Domitrovich et al., 2008). As of the first implementation year with students, Keller was beginning to use both modes of delivery; the ISS Committee wanted to integrate SELIS with existing SEL supports and academic content ("We can link [middle school SEL curriculum] activities to supporting the reflection tool"), as well as create stand-alone SELIS lessons based on resources from the online platform. As for the delivery agents, research comparing the intervention delivery of a school's own teachers versus outside specialists has shown inconsistent results; quality of delivery may depend more on interpersonal skills such as affective engagement, sensitivity, and responsiveness (Domitrovich et al., 2008). The interpersonal skills of the ISS Committee and general staff (i.e., Keller's delivery agents) would be difficult to quantify without targeted measures (e.g., staff survey to rate the effectiveness and interpersonal skills of ISS Committee members as trainers) or observations specifically focused on these constructs. (Again, these may be areas for future research at Keller.)

Implementation Quality of Support System Model

Core Elements

Because of SELIS's train-the-trainer strategy, the program's support system consists of two interwoven strands: (1) the SELIS Center provides initial training (Year 1) and ongoing supports (Years 1 and 2) to the school's SELIS implementation team as they implement with general school staff and students, and (2) the school's SELIS implementation team provides initial training (Year 1) and ongoing supports (Years 1 and 2) to the general school staff as they implement with students. For the initial SELIS Center training, the program requires each school to send at least one school administrator and at least two mental health professionals or teachers from different grade levels. For ongoing implementation support, the SELIS Center provides the implementation team with coaching sessions and online resources such as SELIS materials, sample lessons, roll-out plans, and staff training guides.

Implementation Quality of Core Elements. In terms of fidelity to the support system, Keller's implementation mostly adhered to the developer model. In Year 1, Keller received initial training from the SELIS Center for a small implementation team, who then brought the training content and materials back to the school to train the rest of the staff. (There were four staff PDs on SELIS in the first year.) In Year 2, the SELIS implementation team provided ongoing training and support to the general school staff as the school began implementation with students. In both years of implementation, the SELIS Center provided ongoing coaching support through the SELIS Support Team (in conjunction with University partners) and program resources through the online platform for educators[8]. The SELIS Support Team coaches (Naomi and Catherine) and coordinators (Alexandra and Sophia) provided in-person support by attending ISS Committee meetings whenever possible to assist with implementation

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[8] Keller was provided with two years of access to the online platform as part of the initial training package; subsequent years of access required an additional subscription fee.

planning; they also presented on SELIS concepts and provided administrative support during SELIS PDs and staff retreats. Support Team members also maintained e-mail communication with Ms. Williams to check in about implementation progress and offer support. Importantly, the Support Team assisted Ms. Williams with navigating the online platform to find key resources such as lesson plans and activity guides.

There was one main point of deviation from the support system model—the initial SELIS Center training was not attended by any administrator from the school, including the one leading the implementation team. As an administrator at an under-resourced school, Ms. Williams was unable to attend the off-site, two-day training despite her enthusiasm for the program. Nonetheless, she made the strategic decision to get as many Keller staff members (seven) trained as possible:

> Through those trainings we've been able to get more of our staff trained, which I'm really, really excited about. We actually have a plan now, finally, for schoolwide implementation, which is exciting. I think it's just us building capacity over time.

At the same time, she recognized the importance of her administrator role in the success of the implementation:

> They like admin to go and see models of [SEL] implementation, um, but I haven't participated in those. I have so many things on my plate, it's just hard. … So that's why it's important for me for members of the team to really go experience it, because at the end of the day it's going to be a group effort. And I see my role as the admin as creating an environment where it can take place. So whether it be having conversations where we make sure we get on the agenda for a PD, whether it be us having specific days or expectations for roll-out, in working with staff to make sure this is an initiative that we're going to do as a staff … I see that as my role as admin. I could totally, I'm sure, benefit from the learning and be able to use it and that—that will be the plan, you know what I mean? But I also would like to almost experience it authentically with the teachers too.

By managing the logistical details that made implementation possible, Ms. Williams demonstrated her commitment to the SELIS program even without attending the

training. Additionally, she felt that her perspective as someone who did not attend the training benefited the ISS Committee as it developed SELIS PDs and resources for teachers and general staff.

Standardization

Initial training and ongoing support provided by the SELIS Center are standardized as part of the developer's training model and materials; SELIS Center employees should receive the same professional development on training and coaching educators in SELIS implementation. Additionally, the SELIS Center provides school implementation teams with standardized roll-out plans and staff training resources, although they are presented as guidelines rather than strict protocols.

Implementation Quality of Standardization. Research that monitors the standardization of an intervention's support system has been limited, although it has been increasingly recognized as a critical implementation factor for interventions using the train-the-trainer model (Domitrovich et al., 2008). While the support system provided by the developer to implementers is likely to be standardized (e.g., adherence to developer's coaching strategies and protocols), fidelity to standardization is less likely in the second strand of support (e.g., ISS Committee to general staff). The SELIS Center does provide staff training resources for implementation teams, but these are meant to be guidelines and not monitored for adherence. However, since the support system provided by the ISS Committee was tailored to the specific needs of the general staff (e.g., advisory sign-ups for ISS Committee members to co-facilitate SELIS lessons with teachers), it could be argued that non-standardization of the support system was actually an asset for implementation quality at Keller.

Delivery

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Delivery of the support system is defined by mode of delivery, intensity, and frequency (Domitrovich et al., 2008). For both strands, the mode of delivery for the initial training is intended to be in person, either with the SELIS Center trainers at a training facility or the SELIS implementation team at the school. Ongoing support from the SELIS Center to the school's implementation team may include a combination of in-person meetings, remote activities (e.g., virtual coaching sessions), and online resources; ongoing support from the SELIS implementation team to the general school staff includes in-person coaching at the school site as well as online resources. In terms of intensity of the training, the SELIS Center provides an two-day intensive training for the implementation team, while the implementation team provides gradual training (e.g., staff PDs) for general staff over the course of the first year. Intensity and frequency of ongoing support for either strand is not explicitly described by the developer; coaching between the SELIS Center and the implementation team is most likely meant to be regular but less frequent than that between the implementation team and general staff who all work at the same site.

Implementation Quality of Delivery. In terms of dosage, the ISS Committee members who attended the SELIS Center training received approximately 16 hours of intensive training over two days. Aside from one incident with the trainers, the attendees greatly benefited from an in-person mode of delivery, which research has shown to lead to enhanced fidelity of implementation compared to remote or video training (Domitrovich et al., 2008). The ongoing coaching and support provided by the SELIS Center and SELIS Support Team was also in person whenever possible, supplemented by e-mail communication and some remote coaching. In terms of frequency, Support Team members attended most of the ISS Committee meetings and maintained regular e-mail communication during the implementation period.

As for trainings and ongoing support provided from the ISS Committee to the general staff, the mode of delivery was in person at the school site. Dosage of SELIS training and professional development provided by the ISS Committee could be quantified as follows: four regular staff PDs (90 minutes each) and two full-day staff retreats (6 hours each) across a 16-month period (first PD in December 2018 and last PD in March 2020). This amounts to a total of 18 hours of training during the implementation period, although the frequency was somewhat irregular (e.g., two SELIS PDs in one month, no SELIS PDs in two consecutive months) due to extenuating circumstances. In order to attend to the effects of large gaps in between trainings, the SELIS PDs and retreats always included a review of previously shared SELIS concepts, tools, and activities for staff to refresh their memories and increase their familiarity with the SELIS program overall.

In terms of quality of delivery, research shows that "interpersonal skills are an essential part of delivering training and on-going support—the common elements of an intervention support system" (Domitrovich et al., 2008, p. 11). However, as previously discussed, the interpersonal skills of the SELIS Center trainers and ISS Committee members were not evaluated within the scope of this study. As for the delivery and access of online supports, the ISS Committee sometimes ran into technical issues with SELIS's online platform, either due to the platform's interface or user error. Lesson plans appeared to be difficult to find without direct guidance from the SELIS coach; embedded videos were difficult to play during lessons (e.g., teachers could not play videos in PowerPoint presentations without being logged into the platform); videos and other resources were difficult to keep track of while navigating the platform (e.g., Ms. Bailey suggested the addition of a video gallery to save "favorite" videos); and password access expired during Year 2 and was difficult to reinstate. These technical

issues—particularly the inability to find the lesson plans on the platform—significantly delayed key implementation activities; for example, the roll-out of customized lesson plans for Keller teachers did not begin until March of Year 2 of implementation.

Summary

While the implementation quality of the intervention and support system varied across core elements, standardization, and delivery, it is clear that the success of the implementation relied on many considerations, some of which were not closely investigated in this study. In the next section, I will present the context in which the SELIS implementation occurred and examine the contextual factors beyond the intervention and support system models that affected the implementation quality.

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Implementation Quality: Contextual Factors

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In addition to assessing implementation quality of the intervention and its support system based on their respective components, it is critical to assess implementation quality within the context of the intervention in order to truly understand the outcome (Chen, 1990; Greenberg et al., 2005). The conceptual framework for implementation quality (Domitrovich et al., 2008) provides a multi-level social-ecological model that represents potential contextual factors; as previously stated, the inclusion of factors in this framework is based on both theory and empirical research. It should be noted that factors across all levels are interdependent (e.g., state-level policy may directly impact a teacher's attitude about implementing an SEL intervention or indirectly impact implementation quality through the allocation of funding for SEL) and may also be bi-directional (e.g., teacher burnout can impact implementation quality, while the success or failure of implementation can also impact teacher burnout). These macro-, school-, and individual-level contextual factors and

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their effects on implementation quality were considered in detail within the narrative of the SELIS implementation at Keller-University Community School.

Macro-Level Factors

Macro-level factors are factors within the education system, the community, and the government that may have impacts on school-based interventions. I begin with a suggestion for an additional category that was not included in the original conceptual framework: environmental and societal factors.

Environmental and Societal Factors

While this category was not included in the original conceptual framework, the present study cannot ignore the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic and the subsequent societal changes on a school like Keller—and by extension, the SELIS implementation. In particular, the mandated closure of school campuses proved to be a severe disruption of Keller's capacity to implement SELIS and social-emotional supports in general. As the teachers and staff scrambled to support their students in the transition to distance learning, the school entered a "survival mode" and was primarily concerned with addressing the immediate basic needs of their students. Keller, like many other schools in underserved communities, became a hub for COVID-19 resources, providing students and families with laptops, internet hotspots, free lunches ("We have maybe 80% to 90% of students who need lunches"), and even cleaning products and hand sanitizer. At the same time, Keller teachers and staff were still committed to providing their students with high-quality instruction and holding them to high academic expectations, and annual events that celebrated students' academic achievement (e.g., Keller's "Evening of Excellence") were held virtually rather than being canceled.

However, non-essential school structures were paused for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year, including the monthly committee meetings. Without regular meetings, it was difficult for the ISS Committee to regroup and figure out if and how they could facilitate SELIS implementation remotely. When I asked if distance learning had necessitated replacing or supplementing SELIS with other SEL supports, Ms. Williams emphasized the school's commitment to SELIS while also acknowledging the disruptions to the ISS Committee's implementation activities:

> So definitely I would say it has not been replaced. SELIS is not a supplement at all at our school. Our intention is for it to be our social-emotional curriculum, or our way of doing things. … The struggle that we're having now is what does that look like virtually, and we haven't necessarily had the time to really sit down and plan that, or even to think about that. I mean, so it's been kind of—for a lack of a better word, it's been definitely put on the back burner. We have not as a team addressed it.

Unfortunately, any momentum that was gained from the March 6th SELIS PD and relaunch was abruptly halted. As one of the committee members shared: "I'm just gonna be honest, unfortunately SELIS just kind of went south. You know, we haven't been in the Zoom classrooms doing anything with SELIS." Mr. Miller was explicit in attributing the stalled implementation activities to the pandemic and school closure: "We had planned to do our once-a-month PDs on SELIS, but that just didn't happen because of, you know, the shutdown. … Maybe we would've been able to stick to SELIS if the pandemic hadn't happened."

The disruption to SELIS was especially distressing considering the level of need in Keller's student population. While the pandemic amplified existing social inequities in communities like Keller's, Ms. Williams also recognized COVID-19 as a trauma in itself for their students:

> We're looking at COVID as basically providing a new trauma for our kids. And I think even if you ask some of the kids and if you really listen to them talk about

how they feel about being, quote unquote, quarantined at home and having to stay at home, like, it's all a new trauma. … I think it's definitely impacting our kids differently than it is impacting other kids. Some of our kids, what we noticed while they're Zooming, they're also trying to be caregivers to their siblings while they're, quote unquote, in class. … We say "average" student at Keller but our students are dealing with much more than the average student. Average for Keller is not the same as average for everywhere else. … And so I've always thought about school as being a safe haven for our kids, meaning that they wanted to come and when they were there at school, they felt good even if life around them may not be wonderful or 100% awesome. But now that's been taken from them.

One of the Keller teachers shared her experience of seeing her students' home environments: "I'm seeing things on my screen that I don't want to see. … Some of them are in shelters." Another teacher had a similar experience: "I've seen things that make me understand why most of these students' cameras are turned off, and why they will stay off." Alternatively, many Keller staff were finding it difficult to track down their students, some of whom had not been seen or heard from since the school closure. Some ISS Committee members spent much of their time trying to get in touch with students and families, even after work hours. One committee member shared the limitations of their outreach activities:

We have—I have a SPED kid that we have not seen since March 13th. So that was all last semester from March to June [2020], and then all this year [2021]. We have not seen him, not one day. And we've called his house, spoke to his mom, offered hotspots, but she—mom didn't even pick up the stuff. What do you do? What do you do? And I'll be honest with you, the teacher has called [child protective services agency], and they said they are not taking reports for absenteeism at this time.

Additionally, the racial unrest and Black Lives Matter protests that followed George Floyd's killing by a police officer were significant stressors on the emotional well-being of Keller's students as well as its staff. As described by Ms. Green:

I think there's a lot of things going on in the world and politically that kind of are impacting not just, you know, like, obviously COVID, but are impacting the

dynamics of, you know, how the school runs, like what we're expected to do. So I think the way that it's changed is just, like, overwhelming.

Even as they acknowledged that their students needed social-emotional supports more than ever before, the ISS Committee found that SELIS was not as compatible with distance learning as some other SEL supports. Ms. Williams shared:

> We were used to using SELIS and that was like our common language that we were using, but then I haven't found that the SELIS tools are as accessible and easy, virtually. So that has been a struggle with providing those resources through SELIS, but we've been trying to provide other things for them to kind of get kids talking, to talk about emotions, to, you know, just kind of be able to express what they're experiencing.

Mr. Miller described an alternative SEL support: "So the district came out with—it wasn't SELIS but they came out with a set of social-emotional, what would you call it, like, little videos on things that teachers can do in the classroom, like check-ins." Ms. Williams agreed that the district-provided SEL resources had been helpful and easily accessible, reducing the school's need for SELIS:

> Obviously they've made [middle school SEL curriculum] widely available. They've made it more digitalized or virtual, they've made it more user friendly for those things. And they've also provided some other ones. So we've been trying to encourage, you know, conversations around voice. I provided some things for teachers that I asked them to do, like a six-week video series on student voice, on having a voice.

Alternatively, Ms. Bailey felt that distance learning could be conducive to SELIS implementation: "I think this is actually the perfect time to start it, because they're already a captive audience. Like, the kids are watching from home—you can show SELIS videos and talk about it." Ms. Bailey then acknowledged that the ISS Committee was still having problems accessing the online platform, meaning they did not currently have access to SELIS videos or other instructional materials.

More than anything else during the implementation period, the COVID-19 pandemic was a severely disruptive environmental and societal factor that led to community- and school-level changes that interrupted the SELIS implementation in Year 2. After March 16, 2020, the staff and students did not return to campus for the rest of the school year. The reflections shared by the ISS Committee provide compelling evidence that the progress for SELIS implementation (i.e., rolling out SELIS with students) was directly and negatively impacted by the pandemic and subsequent school closure.

Policies and Financing

Federal, state, and district-level policies and practices can have fiscal, regulatory, and administrative effects on implementation quality. During Year 1 of SELIS implementation (2018-2019), Keller staff were involved in an intensive accreditation process for its new high school grade levels; Keller staff and the University partnership team met weekly to articulate their curriculum, instruction, assessment plans, school culture initiatives, and shared governance structures. The school's self-study report was submitted in December 2017, followed by a site visit from the accreditation agency in April 2018; initial accreditation was received in June 2018. While the extra workload from the accreditation process may have taken staff time away from SELIS activities in the first year, it is important to note that SELIS was named as one of the schoolwide improvement priorities as a practice that supported students' and families' social-emotional well-being, which helped to increase the ISS Committee's commitment to the SELIS implementation and long-term ISS goals for the school (e.g., the Keller-University Wellness Center).

Leadership and Human Capital

Leadership and human capital pertain to community capacity and empowerment, availability of qualified professionals to implement an intervention, availability of trainers and coaches, allocation of PD days across the school year, a well-respected champion of the program, and district-level administrative support. Because of Keller's partnership with the University (further discussed in the next section), much of the leadership and human capital that supported the SELIS implementation came directly from University partners. Through the SELIS Center and SELIS Support Team, Keller had access to qualified professionals, trainers, and coaches who could assist the school's implementation team. Additionally, the partnership with the University provided funding for additional SELIS PD days (staff retreats in June and August) during the summer when teachers and staff would normally not get paid to attend trainings; this allowed for intensive training on SELIS concepts and tools, as well as promoting a sense of camaraderie and collective efficacy among the staff as they undertook Year 2 of implementing with students.

Community-University Partnerships

Community-university partnerships have been identified as effective mechanisms for promoting the use and implementation of evidence-based practices (Spoth & Greenberg, 2005). The partnership model allows both parties to "build a shared vision, identify community needs, select appropriate intervention strategies, and create a support system for training and use" (Domitrovich et al., 2008, p. 13). As described by Ms. Lee (University liaison): "Our model of working with schools is to work in collaboration with them and figure out what's the best way to grow that school to be the best that it can be." Alongside the University, Keller was able to identify an appropriate evidence-based SEL intervention to address the school's needs, then leverage community partnerships (e.g., SELIS Support Team) to provide support during

the multi-year process for high-quality, sustainable SELIS implementation. Additionally, the University partnership was able to fund the implementation for an under-resourced school like Keller. As Ms. Williams shared:

> Money is always an issue, and we didn't necessarily have money to shell out, like, thousands and thousands of dollars to go buy the materials and then roll out this huge professional development where we could have everyone on the same page, or at least foundational learning. And so, you know, through our MOU with the University, we were able to hear about SELIS through the Community Services Center at the University. And so basically it was offered to us, so we were like, "Hey! You can't beat that." You know what I mean? And so, you know, let's do that.

Not only was the University invested in bringing an evidence-based SEL intervention to Keller, it also identified and addressed the need to invest in a corresponding support system that would help to ensure sustainability and implementation quality.

School-Level Factors

School-level factors are factors that exist within the school as a shared environment and can influence implementation quality.

Mission-Policy Alignment

Implementation quality is impacted by an intervention's alignment with the school's mission and ability to be integrated into school policy and practices (Payne et al., 2006). As previously discussed, social-emotional supports were incorporated into the school's accreditation application as a prioritized improvement strategy; it was also included in the school's mission statement. Even before the SELIS implementation, Keller had acknowledged the link between academic achievement and social-emotional outcomes and was committed to providing a schoolwide intervention (Ms. Williams: "It was amazing that we didn't have a schoolwide SEL intervention considering the level of need here.") Alignment with the school's mission and policy on social-emotional supports allowed SELIS to be more easily accepted into school practices by both the

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staff and students. Ms. Green described a shared belief among Keller teachers, staff, and administrators:

> SEL helps us to think about the whole student, and the sense that we're not as concerned with the day-to-day in the curriculum as much as we are concerned about, you know, how our students are doing emotionally and how their home life is, how that impacts them as a learner. And then also using that to inform how students, you know, learn the material. We need to be aware of how a student is, where they're at, you know, checking in about what's going on with them, because that will always impact how they learn. So keeping that kind of at the forefront.

Decision Structure

Decision structure is defined as "the amount of discretion exercised by teachers in solving problems they encounter in the classroom, their contribution to the development of school policies, and the flexibility they have in how they teach"; additionally, structure is related to "the extent to which power is centralized" (Domitrovich et al., 2008, p. 13). As described in Chapter 4, the Keller-University partnership implemented a governance structure with staff committees that oversaw major areas of the school and a shared governance council that was open to anyone who wanted to participate in the school's decision-making processes. While the SELIS program was originally selected by school administrators in conjunction with University partners, the ISS Committee (open to anyone who wished to join) was comprised of teachers, counselors, and support staff who had a direct say in determining how SELIS should be implemented and integrated with the school's existing curricula and practices. Research has shown that this level of autonomy and contribution increases staff motivation and commitment to high-quality program implementation (Ringwalt et al., 2003).

Resources

Implementation quality is directly influenced by the amount and type of resources available to support the implementation; resources can include funds, materials, knowledge, skills, equipment, monetary incentives or stipends for training, dedicated staff time for intervention activities, and physical space. Through generous financial support from the University partnership, Keller was provided with ample professional development (knowledge and skills) and materials from the SELIS Center and SELIS Support Team, as well as funding for dedicated staff training time (PDs and staff retreats).

However, the experiences of the ISS Committee demonstrated that they needed additional person power, resources, and time to accomplish their implementation goals and achieve certain benchmarks (e.g., full roll-out of SELIS tools). None of the committee members were solely dedicated to ISS or the SELIS implementation; they participated in committee and SELIS activities on top of their actual jobs at the school. As such, there was often an issue of attendance at committee meetings due to conflicts with staff's other commitments (e.g., after school tutoring, IEP meetings with parents, counseling sessions with students), leaving a core team of approximately four committee members to handle the lion's share of the planning and preparation for SELIS PDs or student activities. Additionally, staff turnover between Year 1 and 2 included three key team members (Ms. Thompson, Ms. Campbell, and Ms. Gutierrez) who had been heavily involved with implementation planning and activities. While the new members in Year 2 (Ms. Bailey and Ms. Coleman) were also very engaged with the program, neither of them had attended an official SELIS training; thus it took time in the beginning of the school year to catch them up on the SELIS program and the committee's plans and goals for implementation.

In every follow-up interview I conducted, ISS Committee members indicated that time was the biggest or one of the biggest factors that impacted implementation. Mr. Davis summed up the need for more person power and time in order to effectively participate in the ISS Committee:

> It's just people and time. That's the most important thing is people's time. Because most people did not have time, after school they did not have time. Like they didn't have time on the day that Ms. Williams scheduled, and she didn't have time on another day to do it. You know, Bailey didn't have time, Green didn't have time, Coleman didn't have time, Miller didn't have time. You know, so now our team is whittled down to—Campbell isn't there anymore, Coleman's doing the Title I. … And it's just not a lot of people that want to give up their time to be a part of something that just takes time to volunteer for. You know, this is it. It just takes time to volunteer for, then you have to come up with ideas to do it. And it takes time to do certain things. I mean, I'll be a part of it but it also takes away from, you know, what I do too, but I don't mind because I'll give the time, you know.

As the committee chair, Ms. Williams addressed the staff's perception that the ISS Committee was "a lot of work."

> I do believe that I ask a lot from the committee, you know what I mean? You know, I hate to say it like this, you always get the people that were like, "Oh, well, they needed a place to go so put them on ISS." Those people usually don't last long. Or if they are there, they're just there. Because I think I do ask a lot of that committee, you know what I mean? And I know that. I express that as well, that I feel like we are the GSM that works the hardest. Like, let's be for real. We're the only ones that meet on non-meeting days, you know what I mean? Because that's what it takes. I have a pride about that. But then I also have sympathy for our team as well. Like, I feel like I don't want to burn you out, you know what I mean? So I always have to try to balance that.

As a complication to the need for more person power, there was a consensus in the committee that someone from within the Keller community would be most effective in engaging other staff in trainings or students in the classrooms. While Naomi (SELIS coach) took the lead for the first couple of SELIS PDs, her role was gradually minimized until the PDs were entirely facilitated by ISS Committee members

(all Keller staff). This helped to demonstrate the committee's ownership of the implementation and garner more support and buy-in from general school staff. When Ms. Bailey adapted the SELIS lesson plan for Keller teachers, she tailored the activity based on her knowledge of her students. While she already had many demands on her time with her teaching duties ("I didn't sleep last night because I was doing grades for 200 kids"), she was also determined to complete the lesson plan herself rather than hand it off to someone from the SELIS Support Team. For high-quality implementation, adaptations of the SELIS program needed to be contextually and culturally specific to the Keller community, which required someone with inside knowledge of the staff and students. In this way, the ISS Committee members were absolutely the right people to implement SELIS, but they also had "real" jobs at the school that often took priority over the implementation.

Personnel Expertise

Quality of implementation can also be impacted by the level of intervention expertise among the staff. While Keller did not have an internal SEL specialist to provide evidence-based support and serve as a "key opinion leader" (Domitrovich et al., 2008, p. 13), the implementation team pooled their expertise and acted as champions for the SELIS program. In terms of qualified staff, Keller had a school psychologist on site to support students with more severe needs; the ISS Committee also relied on qualified coaches from the SELIS Support Team. However, during the implementation period, the issue of not having a PSW (Psychiatric Social Worker) on site often arose during ISS Committee meetings, particularly when discussing which mental health professionals could provide additional support to students with severe needs and to teachers who did not feel equipped to handle sensitive situations with their students. This was a concern shared by Ms. Green in Year 2 of implementation:

I know a huge issue is just not having counselors. And I mean, we only have one psychologist, we don't really have any other people to check in with students about their emotional well-being. We don't have a PSW. We had a PSA [Pupil Services and Attendance counselor], we don't have one anymore.

In the implementation of an SEL intervention with a high-needs student population, Keller would have benefited from additional full-time mental health professionals with the relevant expertise for implementing a program like SELIS.

Administrative Leadership

Research has shown that the successful implementation of any schoolwide initiative is greatly enhanced by endorsement or advocacy from school administrators (Greenberg et al., 2017). Without the administrators' endorsement, staff may perceive that the intervention is outside of the school's academic mission. While Ms. Williams's involvement in the ISS Committee spoke for itself (i.e., an administrator was leading the implementation of a schoolwide SEL intervention, therefore it must be important to the school), involvement from administrative leadership also requires oversight and accountability structures to ensure follow-through. For the SELIS implementation, particularly in Year 2, Ms. Campbell discussed the importance of having administrators (not just ISS Committee members) follow up with individual teachers and observe SELIS activities with students in the classroom:

[Implementation] was really up to the teachers. If we had teachers who are really implementing it, then you would have seen students really being able to engage in it. I just think we probably needed more of a push. There weren't as many teachers involved as we wanted them to be, you know, in the classroom really doing it. And, you know, I had some suggestions around that, but that's really up to administration because they would need to be involved in observing those things being implemented and really like pushing for those things to be implemented. So as far as my role was, that was just to suggest.

Additionally, endorsement from the administration could be demonstrated by providing dedicated class time for the intervention. In February 2021 (after the end of

the implementation period), Ms. Williams shared that the district was now embedding social-emotional supports into the advisory period:

> The district is making the push [for SEL] as well. So at the beginning of this year, all schools across the district are mandated to provide, quote unquote, an advisory for social-emotional learning. We've always had some sense of advisory at our school for the last couple of years, so that wasn't new for us. But it was very new for the district to mandate as part of your schedule, you provide an advisory. They set limitations on the number of students that would be in that advisory, so they wanted to make sure that the class sizes were small and manageable, where you could, quote unquote, have an intimate space with only so many students. So I thought that was big coming from big district, not even local district, right? So I thought that was a positive thing.

While the new policy demonstrated the district's endorsement of SEL, endorsement from Keller's administrators would require the installation of accountability structures to enforce the policy and ensure that teachers were dedicating advisory time to implementing SELIS with their students.

School Culture

Culture refers the "norms, values, and shared beliefs or assumptions" of a particular group that influence "the way things are routinely done" (Domitrovich et al., 2008, p. 5); culture may also reflect a group's expectations based on past experiences (i.e., historical context). Because Keller staff had experienced a series of school reform efforts, a recently launched university partnership, and the introduction of numerous and often overlapping SEL supports in recent years, the school was more than likely to experience what the SELIS Center trainers called "intervention fatigue" once SELIS was introduced. Additionally, at the very beginning of the implementation period, Ms. Gutierrez had expressed concerns about the school culture in terms of not taking mental health seriously, which would potentially impede the implementation quality of an SEL intervention at Keller:

I'm a mental health provider, and there's still a stigma in this community about mental health. "Ooh, go talk to the wizard, go talk to the shrink." "Why do I need to talk to someone about my problems?" Those are all barriers, right, so I think if we just—I think our culture in America, we're more reactive than proactive. … Here in the school setting, I feel it's the same way. It's like we're triaging all these kids that may be getting in fights, suspending them, or, you know, doing things like that, when the reality is if we would've met their needs earlier—Maslow's needs, right, basic food, shelter, and safety—then we can get to self-actualization.

At the same time, Ms. Gutierrez was also hopeful about what SELIS could bring to the school culture (i.e., bi-directional effects between different levels of the conceptual framework) around social-emotional competencies and mental health supports. She envisioned being able to use SELIS to "make our own culture" at Keller, a school where many students and staff had experienced trauma and loss:

Ultimately I think it's going to build empathy. And with empathy, it opens up the doors to being vulnerable. It opens the doors of growth. And so that's what I foresee in the long run is real human connection, versus [flat affect]: "How are you doing?" "I'm good. How are you?" "All right." … But to really be connected, you know, and to be able to express these moments of pain and in moments of happiness. Because we have it all here. We've had loss, we've had staff members who have passed away, and some people don't know how to respond to that. … So I think a public school having SELIS will then help sort those things out and make our own culture.

At the other end of the implementation period, Ms. Bailey shared her assessment of the SELIS implementation and its impact on school culture: "I did have an emotion grid in my room and I did try to use it a little bit, but I still think that, you know, because I was new, I still didn't feel like it was fully in the culture." Still, she was also hopeful about where the school and the SELIS implementation were headed in terms of providing students with effective social-emotional supports: "We're doing an amazing thing at Keller—we're trying to shift the culture. And once we do that, the kids at Keller will be able to do anything."

School Climate and Organizational Health

Climate refers to student and staff perceptions of interpersonal interactions at the school, as well as the school's structural and philosophical characteristics (e.g., sense of community). Organizational health refers to an organization's ability to adapt to changes over time (e.g., openness in communication, orientation to change, open and supportive environment, collective self-efficacy, strong morale).

Considering its complicated historical context, Keller has exhibited remarkable professional resilience in its ability to adapt to changes (e.g., district reforms, university partnership, accreditation process, new high school grades). A district staff survey from Spring 2018 (right before Year 1 of SELIS implementation) captured some key indicators for Keller's school climate and organizational health: over 80% of Keller staff believed that the school promotes trust and collegiality among staff, about 50% believed that the school effectively handles student discipline and behavioral problems, and almost 80% believed that the adults at the school felt a responsibility to improve the school. As for Keller's students, the district survey indicated that just under 50% of students believed that (1) teachers and students [often or almost always] treated each other with respect, (2) all types of students [often or almost always] felt welcome at the school, and (3) there was [often or almost always] a real sense of community at the school.

In a follow-up interview after the end of Year 2 of SELIS implementation, Ms. Bailey (one of the newer teachers) shared her perception of staff's interpersonal relationships and the workplace environment:

> I think Keller has a very strong staff. I think the staff at Keller supports each other tremendously. You know, like, I've had a lot of teaching experiences where the teachers rooms are very toxic. You know, there's many schools where there's a toxic teacher room culture. … But I felt like at my last school and now at Keller, it's not. Like, I feel that people really support each other. When

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something happens, you know, they're there to support you. Had a teacher let me know that he actually had cried tears in his classroom in his first year. And I was like, "Wow, you shared that with me." You know, I'm not used to sharing that type of stuff with each other, you know what I mean? So I felt like, yeah, you know, I didn't cry but I felt shellshocked a lot. And so, them being able to share with each other, I really feel that they really, really, really support each other a lot.

Ms. Bailey's insights seem to align with the open and supportive environment and general sense of community indicated in the 2018 staff survey. As research has shown, these factors most likely had positive effects on implementation quality by contributing to staff members' collective efficacy and willingness to commit to an intervention (Bradshaw et al., 2009).

Characteristics of the School

School-level characteristics may influence the implementation quality and outcomes of an intervention; characteristics include school size, student mobility or absenteeism, school building, student body, at-risk students, effects of low-income urban neighborhoods, and staff turnover (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Many of these school characteristics are directly informed by Keller's historical context (as discussed in Chapter 4).

Prior to the university partnership, Keller had seen high turnover in staff and administration with hundreds of teachers and at least 10 principals over the last 20 years or so. As described by a veteran teacher: "We were trying to create an effective team but every year you have new players." One of the newer teachers shared a similar sentiment: "Students have had long history of not being able to depend on staff" due to staff turnover and the use of long-term substitutes.

Keller also served a particularly vulnerable student population. In the 2018-2019 academic year, the student population was 51% Black and 48% Latino; 29% were

students with disabilities (compared to 13% in the district and 12% in the state), 22% were students who classified as English Learners, 8% of students were identified as homeless (compared to 3% in the district and 3% in the state), and 82% were identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. There was also a large proportion of foster youth.

In the context of a social justice-oriented community school, Keller sought to address systemic inequities present in the community by providing a high-quality education to socioeconomically disadvantaged students of color. In the 2017-2018 academic year, 92% of the faculty were teachers of color, which was reflective of the student population and more diverse than the district and the state. Reflecting on the Keller-University partnership, the principal shared that students were beginning to hold the staff accountable and feel entitled to getting the best in their education: "That's an important change."

While the majority of staff and students reported feeling safe on campus (district surveys, 2018), the effects of being located in an underserved urban community were still present at Keller, as was the level of need for high-quality mental health and social-emotional supports. As described by Ms. Gutierrez (prior to the start of the SELIS implementation):

> I mean, think about all the things these kids go through just to get to campus—prostitution, the drugs. I mean, I see it—I see it every day I come in. The memorials of all the dead people all around. That triggers me and my own trauma, right, let alone students who just went through a loss. Or someone got arrested because they were involved in something similar. It doesn't even have to be similar, just that the cops are around, activating their triggers, you know. So there's so much when it comes to mental health, and to not have a PSW on campus, it just doesn't make sense to me.

More recently, Ms. Bailey shared the challenging experience of teaching at an under-resourced school with last-minute staffing changes and over-large class sizes, while also appreciating the dedication of the ISS Committee:

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I did feel that, you know, we needed more support in the halls, we needed more support with kids who are tardy, we needed more support around shifting the whole culture, because then it boils over. You know, some classrooms had kids spilling out into the hallways, you know what I'm saying? And you'd be like, "Why is their kids spilling in the hallways right now?" And to me, you know, that was the structure of—that's what ISS is about. Introduce new services, like, not just how do you support the child but how do you support the culture? And I do feel that Keller shifting the master schedule, having its issues that it had in the beginning of the year, I think really started us off hard. I had—one class, I had 55 kids in it. And if I was 13, with 55 of my friends in the class and one brand new teacher to Keller—oh, I'm partying too! … So I don't blame the kids, not even a lick. I don't think it was about them as much as it's about the structures that were put in place, you know. So essentially, I feel that I learned from Keller exactly what I want to do to try to integrate much better support for our kids. And I think Ms. Williams has a heart for that. I feel like everyone on the ISS team has a heart for doing that. But we need more support. And we need a culture shift, a complete culture shift around that, like of the school. And I think that's what ISS is trying to do.

Keller's school-level characteristics underscore the need for an SEL intervention like SELIS, while also presenting considerable challenges to implementation quality. Yet the ISS Committee and general staff, including administrators, seemed well-suited to take on this work.

Classroom Climate

Similar to school climate, classroom climate can be assessed on sense of belonging, cooperation and mutual respect, teacher-student interpersonal dynamics, classroom practices, peer or teacher-student conflicts, or student misconduct. These factors can have significant effects on the quality of classroom-based interventions such as SELIS.

Based on the district survey in 2018, about 50% of staff did not agree that the school effectively handles student discipline and behavioral problems. One teacher shared her experience in the classroom in her first year:

You know, my first year at Keller was a whirlwind. I was like, whoa! I was like, if you're not an experienced teacher, you should not be teaching at Keller. You

know, like, it took literally every single thing. I got cussed out in my own classroom. There was like a lot of weird stuff that happened, but the thing about it was that I never felt like kids were bad kids, you know what I'm saying? … I think the biggest thing for me was just the angst that was existing in the kids, and I felt beholden to a system of discipline because I didn't feel like there was a lot of support.

Alternatively, another teacher shared one of her classroom practices that promoted respect, belonging, and positive interpersonal dynamics (prior to the SELIS implementation period):

> We do community circles. I don't do it as consistently as I want but the kids will ask for it. And so we'll put a timer on and we'll stick to the timer, when to stop and clean up. We'll move the chairs and put the chairs in a circle, and you know, I'll choose a talking piece from whatever. Today I shared this particular talking piece I have here. [Picks up painted stone from windowsill.] It's a stone that I made—I had a Kind Club at my last school, and this is supposed to be for Kindness Week. And I talked to them about this stone that says, "Be someone's rainbow." … You know, the circle gives them the opportunity—like, they're engaged when we do it and they want to participate. And sometimes they're a little apprehensive with sharing, but you know, the other kids are like, "Come on, we want to hear you." And so they'll kind of like put a little pressure on them, a little peer pressure, and then the kids will give in and then they appreciate—you know, they don't regret it at all that they participated.

While classroom experiences certainly varied across the school, teachers were in agreement (even before SELIS was implemented) that social-emotional supports were more effective than disciplinary actions as classroom management strategies.

Individual-Level Factors

Individual-level factors of school staff who implement an intervention can have significant effects on implementation quality and outcomes.

Professional Characteristics

Professional characteristics such as education, skills, and experience may influence staff's attitudes and behaviors regarding SEL interventions, thus affecting implementation quality. In the 2017-2018 academic year, Keller faculty had an average

of 13 years of education experience but also included a high proportion of first-year staff members (33% vs. 7% in the district and 6% in the state); 41% were University alumni; 37% held master's degrees; and 2 teachers had doctorates. One of the newer teachers, a graduate from the University's teacher education program, acknowledged the challenges of being a first-year teacher at a Title I school: "You're building the plane as you're flying it." Despite the variation in educational backgrounds and teaching experience, the staff generally appeared engaged and even enthusiastic with the SELIS implementation process, as exemplified during the two staff retreats ("I just want to say I feel really excited about this activity and bringing the whole school together in this way"). However, implementation of SELIS with students in Year 2 (especially after the school closure) most likely required too much of them without consistent support from the ISS Committee, no matter their professional background or skill level. As for the ISS Committee, the variation in their professional backgrounds and familiarity with social-emotional supports did not seem to impact their level of engagement with the SELIS implementation in a consistent way; rather, engagement appeared to be personality-driven.

Psychological Characteristics

Implementation quality has been found to be affected by implementers' psychological characteristics, including: anxiety due to lack of experience or comfort with intervention, reluctance, anger, cynicism versus enthusiasm, confidence, sociability, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, individualization, psychological functioning (e.g., stress, depression, professional burnout), self-efficacy and persistence when facing challenges, and efficacy and proficiency with the intervention. The evaluation of these psychological constructs as related to the SELIS

implementation would require either self-report measures or focused observations, which were outside the scope of this study.

Based on existing interviews and observation data, the most common impediments to implementation quality would most likely be stress and professional burnout. Teachers at Keller already had their hands full, and adding an SEL intervention to their workload required thoughtful planning and consistent support from the ISS Committee; as shared by Ms. Bailey: "You can't give a teacher who's already drowning a lesson plan that looks like this [covered in text] and expect results." Ms. Williams offered a similar insight: "I know SELIS is all about not having a set curriculum, but teachers just want to see a lesson plan. They want something they can print out with activities and handouts." Stress and burnout also influenced committee members' level of engagement during various points of the implementation: "I can't do everything." "I feel defeated." "I feel that [SELIS] was dropped a little bit, but that's because we're all so tired and overworked." The effects of implementers' psychological factors on implementation quality are certainly worthy of future study.

Perceptions of and Attitudes to the Intervention

Intervention-related perceptions and attitudes that impact implementation quality include: acceptance of the intervention based on the individual's needs and priorities; perception of the intervention as a useful and low-complexity strategy for addressing a local problem (e.g., discipline issues); perception of the intervention as better than the current practice and compatible with the school's needs, values, and experiences; perceived effectiveness and success with using the intervention; and understanding and perceived value of intervention components. Perceptions and attitudes may be enhanced with model implementers, quality implementation

exemplars in contextually similar schools, engagement during trainings, and satisfaction with content and delivery.

On the whole, Keller staff (ISS Committee and general staff) seemed to perceive the SELIS intervention as better than the current practice (i.e., previous SEL supports were fragmented by grade level and not universal) and compatible with the school's needs and experiences (i.e., need for schoolwide SEL intervention and shared language to address students' behavioral and disciplinary issues). Keller staff also seemed to understand and value the intervention components (e.g., requesting emotion grid posters for classrooms, wanting to see staff and student contracts in common areas of the school, "this is 100% what we need"). Perceptions and attitudes about SELIS were also enhanced by model implementers (e.g., ISS Committee as models for the general staff), engagement during trainings (e.g., staff wellness activities, staff retreats), and satisfaction with content and delivery (e.g., "I just want to say I feel really excited about this activity and bringing the whole school together in this way"). Additionally, Ms. Williams felt that the general staff had been primed for SELIS with a series of SEL PDs and workshops that enhanced staff's perceptions and attitudes about SEL prior to the official introduction of SELIS. In this way, a broader overview of SEL was used to "frame our work" and increase engagement from general staff before SELIS was officially launched.

For the general staff, the ISS Committee believed that the main impediment to implementation quality would be "intervention fatigue" due to the perception that SELIS was just another disruption to their classrooms or just another SEL experiment. This perception is common among educators in urban schools faced with countless reform efforts (Hess, 2011); for Keller staff, it was rooted in the school's historical context and past experiences that did not always yield positive experiences or

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outcomes. Even in terms of partnering with the University, some teachers had concerns that the partnership would not last or that it would not yield lasting changes. (For the University's part, it acknowledged that the partnership might take years, even decades, but they were confident that Keller-University Community School would succeed.)

The ISS Committee, particularly Ms. Williams, seemed committed to making sure the general staff perceived Keller as a "SELIS school." During one of the planning meetings for a SELIS PD, another committee member wanted to incorporate a University-developed SEL practice that some teachers had used in the past. Ms. Williams shared her hesitancy: "I don't want teachers to think of SELIS as a drive-by PD, and now we're moving onto the next thing. I don't want to confuse them with too many PDs." In a follow-up interview after Year 2 of implementation, Ms. Williams reflected on a staff meeting (over Zoom) where she introduced a video series on student empowerment that the district had developed as a distance learning resource:

> The first question that I saw in the chat: "So we're not a SELIS school anymore?" "Oh, no, no, no, absolutely we're still a SELIS school." So for me, it felt like hopefully they valued SELIS and they wanted to stay with SELIS. I hope that's what that meant. Or maybe it was kind of like, "Oh, we're jumping ship again and we're starting something new?" And I was like, "Absolutely not, we're not doing that because we put a lot of time into SELIS." I would never want to throw that away. And I think it's valuable. I think it's valuable.

At another staff meeting (also over Zoom), Ms. Williams and Mr. Davis (founding ISS Committee members) hosted a break-out room and fielded questions from new ISS members Ms. Huang and Mr. Lewis about using SELIS versus the restorative justice approach. Ms. Huang suggested that SELIS could be one method within the ISS system or restorative justice system, which seemed to make Mr. Davis slightly nervous. Once the staff were back in the main room, Mr. Davis asked one of the other teachers, "Ms. Krishna, are you still using SELIS in your classroom?" Ms. Krishna: "Yes, especially

during advisory." Mr. Davis: "Okay, good." Ms. Huang then said, loudly: "Mr. Davis, I love SELIS! I have no problem with SELIS!" Mr. Davis laughed: "Okay, Ms. Huang." Aside from demonstrating the camaraderie between staff members, this incident shows that the staff's perceptions of SELIS (i.e., as the main social-emotional support at Keller versus one of many social-emotional supports) had an impact on their commitment to the intervention. In a follow-up interview, Ms. Bailey reflected on the drop-off of SELIS implementation in Year 2 but also reiterated her commitment to making sure the "SELIS culture" was perceived as a key component of Keller's overall school culture:

> I think that we need it, but we got to be serious about it, you know what I'm saying? Like, I'm not saying we weren't serious about it before, but I feel that it was dropped a little bit, but that's because we're all so tired and overworked. I think it had to do with—once we discovered how deep we had to get into those lesson plans, remember that? Yeah, I think it was really hard to do it, it's hard to keep up with. But I think that if we're going to do this, we have to do it all the way. You know what I'm saying? We've got to, like, walk it, talk it, breathe it. You know, we need to see SELIS signs everywhere. You know what I'm saying, we need to see it on the bathroom doors, we need to see it on the bathroom walls, we need to see it in every class. We need to, you know, have a video about it every day, you know what I'm saying? We need to, like, really keep the repetition, repetition, repetition. We must build the SELIS culture, if we're really going to do it.

Conclusion

With an eye toward theory-building and ensuring sustainability for SELIS and interventions like it, it is imperative for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to understand which elements of the implementation quality conceptual framework are most relevant to producing desired outcomes. Based on the implementation timeline and narrative (Chapter 5), I have presented a thorough examination of the contextual factors of the SELIS implementation and my findings on which components and factors were most impactful. In the Discussion chapter, I will discuss the significance of the

findings and their practical implications for the macro- and school-level policies, pre-implementation strategies, and support system components required for successful implementation of SEL interventions.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men / Gang aft agley.

[The best laid schemes of Mice and Men / Go often awry.]

—Robert Burns, 1785

Implementation research encompasses the gap between theory and practice, between what is intended and what is done. Indeed, implementation research exists because the intended intervention is almost never perfectly executed—and as researchers and practitioners have come to understand, it does not need to be. Successful implementation does not need to align exactly with the intervention model in order to achieve desired outcomes.

For school-based preventive interventions like social and emotional learning, the "what" is quite clear and well-documented: improving students' social-emotional competencies leads to improved academic outcomes. The "how" is less clear; SEL interventions vary widely in skill focus, teaching strategies, and implementation supports. For community schools that are by definition tailored to the needs of their respective communities ("no two alike"), the idea of choosing and replicating an externally developed SEL intervention can be a daunting endeavor. Implementation may not have to be perfect, but the question remains—what does success look like?

In examining an "information-rich" case of a community school's implementation of an SEL intervention, the present study sought to understand how implementation quality can be affected by the intervention itself, the corresponding support system, and the contextual factors associated with the implementers, the

school, and the community. The purpose of the case study was to provide an accurate and detailed narrative of the implementation process in order to identify the key components and contextual factors that are most relevant to high-quality SEL implementation. Using primarily qualitative case study methods and data sources—with special attention paid to interviews with and observations of the school's implementation team—this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What was the implementation process during the first two years of the SELIS intervention at Keller-University Community School?

2. Which components and contextual factors significantly influenced the SELIS implementation process, and how did they influence the quality of implementation?

Although Keller's implementation of the SELIS intervention is ongoing, this case study was necessarily bounded by the first two years of the implementation period, which include key benchmarks identified by the program developer. The quality of the SELIS implementation at Keller was assessed according to the intended intervention and support system models, and intervention components and contextual factors were assessed for the extent of their influence on implementation quality.

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Discussion of Findings

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Becoming a SELIS School

In order to address the first research question, I relied on a chronological timeline and narrative account of Keller's implementation process for the SELIS intervention. The timeline and narrative captured implementation milestones as well as planning and decision-making processes of the ISS Committee (i.e., SELIS implementation team).

Implementation Successes and Deviations. As recommended by the developer[9], Year 1 of implementation focused on staff development; Year 2 expanded to implementing SELIS with students. Based on the comparison between Keller's milestones and the developer's benchmarks, implementation quality of the support system was generally stronger than that of the intervention (Table 6).

Table 6. Comparison of Developer Benchmarks and School Milestones

	SELIS Component	Developer Benchmarks	School Milestones
Year 1 (2018-2019)	Intervention	No implementation with students	Mostly no implementation with students (some introduction to emotion grid)
	Support System	Initial SELIS Center training: 1 admin + 2 counselors or teachers	Initial SELIS Center training: 4 counselors + 2 teachers + 1 coordinator + no admin
		Creation of school SELIS implementation team	Creation of school SELIS implementation team (ISS Committee)
		SELIS training for general staff: SELIS concepts + 4 SEL tools (grid, contract, reflection, plan)	SELIS training for general staff: SELIS concepts + 2 SEL tools (grid, contract)
Year 2 (2019-2020)	Intervention	Introduction for students: 4 SEL tools (grid, contract, reflection, plan)	Introduction for students: 2 SEL tools (grid, contract)
		Implementation with students: one-third of SELIS lessons (45 minutes each)	Implementation with students: 1 SELIS lesson (15 minutes) + teachers' own lessons
	Support System	SELIS Center's ongoing coaching and resources for school implementation team	SELIS Center (+ SELIS Support Team) ongoing coaching and resources for school implementation team
		School implementation team's ongoing coaching and resources for general staff	School implementation team's training (reflection tool) + ongoing coaching and resources for general staff

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[9] The developer's recommended timeline was meant to serve as a guide rather than a strict protocol, but it provides a useful point of reference for Keller's implementation process and milestones.

Deviations from the developer's intended timeline mostly occurred within components of the intervention model (i.e., number of SELIS tools introduced to students, number of SELIS lessons used with students). Within components of the support system model, the main deviations concerned the initial training participants (i.e., no administrator but several additional counselors and teachers trained by SELIS Center); the number of SELIS tools introduced to general staff (i.e., two in the first year, one in the second year, one still pending); and the utility of the SELIS Center's ongoing resources (i.e., lesson plans from SELIS's online platform). The implementation process was subject to cycles of increased momentum, stalled progress, and strategic reassessment to get back on track; this was more prevalent in Year 2, which included with a full-day staff retreat and student roll-out week in the fall, a 7-month gap between staff PDs (as the school contended with staffing and master schedule changes), and a SELIS "relaunch" PD in the spring (right before the school closure).

At the same time, Keller achieved tremendous success during the implementation period, both in the intervention itself and the corresponding support system. High-quality implementation of the SELIS intervention was evidenced by:

- Training and support for school implementation team
  - SELIS Center training for 7 Keller staff
  - ISS Committee as implementation team (at least 4 core members); 15 ISS Committee meetings (implementation planning)
  - Close collaboration with SELIS Support Team
- Training and support for general staff
  - 6 SELIS PDs during school year
  - 2 full-day staff retreats during summer (paid)
- Schoolwide SELIS learning and activities

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- o Shared understanding, language, and visuals of SELIS concepts and tools (emotion grid, contract, reflection)

- o Staff-level, grade-level, and some classroom-level contracts

- o Emotion grid lessons and activities

- o Alignment with existing SEL practices and supports (e.g., community circles, district's middle school SEL curriculum, Patrisse Cullors empowerment workshop)

- Schoolwide SELIS visual displays

- o Interactive emotion grid displayed in main hallway

- o Emotion grid posters displayed on classroom doors

As discussed in the next section, the successes and deviations found within the SELIS implementation process at Keller were impacted by intervention and support system components and multi-level contextual factors that either enhanced or impeded implementation quality.

Implementation Quality in Context

The second research question was concerned with the specific components and contextual factors that significantly influenced the SELIS implementation process, as well as how they influenced the quality of implementation.

Components and Contextual Factors that Impeded Implementation Quality. In considering Year 2 of implementation, it would be reductive to solely attribute the implementation deviations to the COVID-19 pandemic and school closure. While the pandemic and school closure were certainly extreme disruptions, they also exacerbated existing challenges and barriers faced by the school and its staff; environmental and societal factors notwithstanding, the implementation of SELIS at Keller required additional structures and resources in order to be carried out as intended. The

pandemic (and subsequent school closure) should be acknowledged as a major impediment to implementation quality; however, it is more accurate to acknowledge that the pandemic *as experienced by a school like Keller* was a major impediment to implementation quality in Year 2.

On the whole, there were several components and contextual factors that significantly impeded implementation activities and the intended roll-out timeline. These can be categorized as macro-level factors, school-level factors, and intervention and support system factors:

- Macro-level factors
  - COVID-19 and school closure: disruption to ISS Committee activities and intended staff/student activities (e.g., co-facilitated advisory lessons, monthly SELIS PDs)
  - Additional stressors on ISS Committee and general staff: teachers' strike and accreditation process in Year 1; changes in staffing and master schedule in Year 2; COVID-related student needs in Year 2
- School-level factors
  - Limited time and resources: demanding schedules and workloads of ISS Committee members; staff turnover among ISS Committee members; lack of dedicated SEL coordinator
  - Limited structural supports: SELIS not formally embedded into weekly staff PDs or advisory periods with students
  - Lack of accountability measures: no formal observations of classroom implementation by administration or ISS Committee; no evaluation protocols for measuring and reporting process outcomes
- Intervention and support system factors

- o Online platform: technical issues with navigation and account access; delayed access to SELIS lesson plans

- o Resources: unwieldy amount of materials; dense instructional materials; labor-intensive process for ISS Committee to customize lesson plans for Keller teachers and students

- o Difficult to incorporate SELIS resources into distance learning

Components and Contextual Factors that Enhanced Implementation Quality. At the same time, there were many intervention components and contextual factors that successfully enhanced implementation quality. These can be categorized as macro-level factors, school-level factors, individual-level factors, and intervention and support system factors:

- Macro-level factors
  - o Resources, expertise, and support from University partners: Community Services Center, SELIS Center, SELIS Support Team

- School-level factors
  - o Decision structure: ISS Committee (part of school governance) as implementation team; committee membership open to any staff members who wished to provide input on SELIS implementation and integration with school practices
  - o School culture and climate: pre-implementation familiarity with SEL supports and practices (e.g., community circles); open and supportive environment; collective efficacy and willingness among staff to commit to a new SEL intervention

- Individual-level factors

- o Increased capacity with 7 SELIS-trained staff; pooled SEL and SELIS expertise from ISS Committee members (teachers, counselors, support staff, administrator)

- o Demonstrated ownership and expertise of SELIS intervention: SELIS PDs primarily facilitated by ISS Committee (supplemented by SELIS Support Team members)

- Intervention and support system factors

  - o In-person training and support: SELIS Center training and SELIS Support Team coaching for ISS Committee; ISS Committee training and support with general staff

  - o Shared understanding, language, and visuals of SELIS concepts and tools (especially emotion grid and contract)

  - o Resources from online platform: standardized instructional manuals (SELIS concepts and tools), lesson plans, activity guides, videos

  - o Flexibility of SELIS implementation with students: standard (SELIS lesson plans) or infused (embedded in existing curricula or lessons)

Initiatives for Improving Implementation Quality. Based on many lessons learned and strategic planning in Years 1 and 2, the ISS Committee identified several initiatives for ensuring continued progress with SELIS implementation. These initiatives were suitable for implementation upon returning to in-person schooling:

- Structural supports

  - o Out-of-classroom SELIS lead coordinator with support from other ISS Committee members

  - o Required SELIS lessons during advisory periods

- o Formal or informal classroom observations from administrators or ISS Committee members to ensure accountability and promote engagement
- o Regular use of SELIS activities at staff PDs (e.g., opening check-in with emotion grid)
- o More visual displays of SELIS concepts and tools (e.g., emotion grids, contracts) around the school
- o Integration of SELIS concepts and tools with school's restorative justice, empowerment and inclusion, and anti-racist practices
- Supports for classroom implementation
  - o Grade-level lesson plans templates (PowerPoint and handouts) for teachers to use with students
  - o Folder in staff's shared online drive with SELIS lesson plans, activity guides, and resources
  - o SELIS activity baskets (art supplies, handouts, etc.) for teachers to "check out" from the ISS Committee and use with students
  - o Sign-ups for teachers to request co-facilitated SELIS lessons with ISS Committee members during advisory periods

As described by Ms. Bailey, these initiatives were intended to "build the SELIS culture" and continue embedding SELIS into Keller's overall school culture.

In considering the overall implementation timeline and narrative, it is clear that Keller successfully implemented SELIS in the way that made the most sense for Keller, on a timeline that made the most sense for Keller. For many contextual reasons, it was ultimately more prudent to use the SELIS developer's recommended timeline and implementation strategies as guidelines; many of the deviations from the intervention model were in fact contextually appropriate adaptations that made the intervention

more appropriate for a school like Keller. Additionally, while SELIS had been positioned as the jewel in the crown of social-emotional supports at Keller, it was one of several effective supports available to students and staff. Even when contending with the pandemic and school closure, Keller was able to demonstrate the adaptability and resilience of its student support system.

Study Significance

Through case study methodology, this study aimed to test the theoretical and conceptual framework for implementation quality and to determine which factors are most influential in promoting high-quality implementation of school-based SEL interventions. In particular, the study examined the effects of pre-implementation and support system strategies for improving fidelity, gaining buy-in, enhancing implementers' skill and efficacy with the intervention, and other factors for improving implementation quality. This staff-focused study gained valuable insights to the pre-implementation process and support system components by privileging implementers' perspectives and experiences in the context of a train-the-trainer intervention model. Findings provide guidance on pre-implementation and support system structures that should be put in place to prime a school and its staff for high-quality implementation, particularly for train-the-trainer SEL interventions.

Additionally, this study provides insights on how certain adaptations to an intervention model can either impede or enhance implementation quality; these adaptations are relevant to the transferability of the findings to other settings. Researchers acknowledge that "adaptation and tailoring of interventions to community needs are the essential ingredients for successful dissemination of evidence-based interventions that have been missing from prevention science" (Domitrovich et al.,

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2008, p. 19). Through a detailed timeline and narrative account of the implementation process, this study assessed the adaptations used by Keller staff in their implementation of the SELIS intervention (particularly the instructional materials and roll-out timeline) and the related impacts on implementation quality. While this was not an effectiveness study of the SELIS program, the findings reinforce the understanding that high-quality implementation and desired outcomes can be achieved even with deviations from the intervention model—that is, implementation does not need to be perfect in order to be successful.

In the same vein, Keller's implementation of SELIS did not need to be perfect in order for its results to be transferable to other school settings. Certain deviations from the developer's intervention model were contextually appropriate adaptations that actually had positive effects on implementation quality. For example, the delayed roll-out of SELIS tools with the general staff (only three of the four by the end of Year 2) was a result of the ISS Committee's pragmatism about the staff's potential intervention fatigue, professional burnout, and stress. At each SELIS PD, the committee took the time to review previously introduced concepts and tools; they also dedicated a full-day staff retreat to introducing the contract tool, explaining and modeling its usefulness with students, and providing opportunities for staff to practice using it. In this way, the committee avoided overwhelming the general staff with new knowledge, reinforced their understanding of the SELIS tools and practices, and promoted their sense of efficacy around implementing SELIS with their particular student population.

Similarly, the committee sought to enhance implementation quality by providing their colleagues with ready-made PowerPoint templates for SELIS lesson plans to use with their students; they knew that the majority of teachers would not have time to learn how to navigate SELIS's online platform, adapt the developer-provided lesson

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plans, or integrate SELIS content into their existing lesson plans. While this approach deviated from the developer's intention for SELIS concepts, tools, and activities to be embedded into content curricula, the ISS Committee knew that providing ready-made lesson plans in the form of easily shared and edited PowerPoint templates would increase the likelihood that teachers would implement SELIS with their students. The committee's determination to create and disseminate these lesson plans caused some delays to Year 2 implementation activities but ultimately would have contributed to increased dosage and quality of delivery (i.e., indicators for implementation quality).

While the developer's intervention benchmarks and recommended timeline served as useful guidelines, the context in which the SELIS implementation occurred required strategic adaptations from the ISS Committee based on their deep-rooted knowledge and understanding of their colleagues, students, and school. For Keller and schools with similar contextual factors, certain deviations from the developer's intervention model are necessary in order to achieve high-quality implementation and desired outcomes. The distinction between harmful deviation and contextually appropriate adaptation will vary somewhat according to individual school contexts, but as demonstrated by Keller's ISS Committee, on-site implementers with specific contextual knowledge of their schools are well-equipped to make strategic adjustments to the intervention model that enhance rather than impede implementation quality.

Implications

While acknowledging the importance of context-specific adaptations, the study's findings have wide-ranging implications for pre-implementation strategies, support system components, and macro- and school-level policies required for successful implementation of SEL interventions.

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Pre-Implementation Strategies. School-based SEL interventions would benefit from pre-implementation activities that provide staff and students with an overview of SEL more broadly. These activities (e.g., staff PDs, student and family workshops) would prime the school community for an SEL intervention by framing the work in the larger SEL context and familiarizing them with general SEL concepts (e.g., social-emotional competencies, growth mindset, etc.). Another pre-implementation strategy is attending to school culture and climate before introducing an SEL intervention. After establishing certain norms (e.g., talking pieces in community circles), values (e.g., respect), and behaviors (e.g., positive teacher-student interactions) in classrooms and across the school, students and staff would be more likely to take up a social-emotional intervention such as SELIS.

Support System Components. A corresponding support system is essential for any SEL intervention. A high-quality support system must include the following components: (1) Administrators should be engaged in the intervention and support processes, including participating in SEL intervention training whenever possible, providing regular support to SEL implementation leads, and conducting observations of classroom SEL implementation with students. Administrator engagement with and accountability to the SEL intervention will ensure higher implementation quality. (2) Exemplars among the staff should champion the SEL intervention and model SEL practices with students and other staff. Exemplars could be members of the SEL implementation team or a key opinion leader at the school; they should schedule regular staff development and learning opportunities (e.g., learning lunches) in order to promote high-quality implementation among school staff and embed SEL practices in the school culture. (3) Evaluation protocols should be put into place prior to implementation in order to regularly and systematically collect data on process

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outcomes (e.g., number of SEL lessons completed) as well as student outcomes (e.g., self-report surveys on social-emotional competencies).

Macro- and School-Level Policies. Policies at the school, district, and state levels are required to provide the infrastructure and accountability necessary to support SEL interventions. (1) Districts and states should mandate an advisory period that can be used to implement SEL activities during the school day without taking time away from content instruction. Having dedicated time for SEL activities sets expectations from the students and ensures accountability for teachers and staff to implement SEL with students on a regular basis. (2) Districts and states should also mandate an on-site SEL coordinator for each school. Depending on the type of SEL intervention being adopted, the school may also require an implementation team of teachers, counselors, or other support staff, but there must be a dedicated SEL coordinator whose main duties are to facilitate implementation activities. The SEL coordinator must also have regular meetings with school administrators in order to provide updates on implementation progress and request resources or assistance as needed. (3) As a school-level policy, there should be weekly SEL activities during staff PD time. The SEL coordinator and implementation team should use this time to provide ongoing training on SEL concepts, model SEL tools and activities, and check in with general staff about SEL implementation with students.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation to the validity of the findings is the relatively small sample of interview participants (a subset of ISS Committee members) and severely disrupted SELIS implementation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closure. While the pre-implementation and follow-up interviews yielded rich qualitative data, it

would have been useful to interview the ISS Committee members more frequently (e.g., after each monthly meeting) in order to examine their perspectives and experiences throughout the implementation period. To address these concerns, observations and meeting minutes collected from the ISS Committee monthly meetings—which provided valuable insights and documentation of implementation planning and decision-making processes—were further validated through triangulation with corresponding interview data and other data sources.

Because the research site was specifically a university-partnered community school with particularly high-needs students, there may be limitations to the transferability of this case study's findings. During the course of data collection, Keller-University Community School was undergoing substantial changes and establishing new school structures as part of the partnership with the University; these organizational, social, and political factors may be unique to the context of this particular community school. Nonetheless, educators and administrators—particularly those from under-resourced schools in the planning stages of implementing an SEL intervention or similar social-emotional support—can certainly benefit from a greater understanding of the practical challenges involved and strategies for addressing these challenges as identified by fellow practitioners in similar school settings.

Another limitation concerns the sheer amount of evidence required to address the research questions. As the sole researcher for this study, it was often challenging to collect sufficient evidence to assess each of the contextual factors identified in the contextual framework (Domitrovich et al., 2008). It is possible that one or more contextual factors may not have been properly assessed or that my analysis led me to unproven assertions. To address these concerns, I used analytic memos, data triangulation, and member checking as much as possible to attend to my biases, test

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my assertions, and ensure greater validity of my findings. I also endeavored to be transparent when I did not have sufficient evidence to address certain contextual factors (Chapter 6).

For future SEL implementation studies, researchers should choose one or two related contextual factors to investigate, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The present study did not collect data on certain contextual factors from the conceptual framework (e.g., psychological characteristics of trainers or implementers) that may have had significant effects on implementation quality. Investigating these contextual factors will determine whether the indicator was not important to the implementation (and thus did not appear in the data collection) or was overlooked. Future implementation studies should also establish pre- and post-intervention measures for staff and students in order to collect empirical evidence for desired outcomes. As a rule, practitioners and researchers must collaborate in all stages of SEL interventions to develop effective implementation studies and properly understand implementation quality.

For the SELIS implementation at Keller in particular, future research should retroactively examine the perspectives and experiences of teachers and general staff as they were guided in the intervention process by the implementation team. While this study's focus on the implementation team served to capture implementation planning and decision-making processes that could impact implementation quality, data on teacher implementation of the SELIS intervention would provide invaluable insights on how trainers can motivate and sustain teacher and staff engagement throughout the implementation process. Future studies could also investigate if and how Keller was able to relaunch SELIS upon returning to in-person schooling.

Conclusion

From a theoretical perspective, this case study sought to test the conceptual framework for implementation quality and confirm or disconfirm the effects of intervention and contextual factors on implementation quality for SEL interventions. Findings from this study can be used to streamline the implementation quality conceptual framework, emphasize intervention components and contextual factors that have the greatest impacts on implementation quality and desired outcomes, and guide future implementation studies by identifying specific intervention components and contextual factors that should be explored in more detail.

From a practical perspective, this case study provides a chronological timeline and narrative account of the implementation process of an SEL intervention at a community school. Educators, practitioners, and policymakers interested in school-based SEL implementation can benefit from insights on the components, contextual factors, and contextually appropriate adaptations that were most effective and essential to ensuring implementation quality. Furthermore, as school campuses continue to re-open and students and staff return to in-person schooling, Keller will be equipped with lessons learned and practical strategies for relaunching SELIS with staff and students and reinforcing its status as a SELIS school.

Appendix A

<u>Participant Interview Protocol (Baseline)</u>

Understanding of SEL and ISS (Before Roll-out)
1. How do you define Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)? How do you define Integrated Student Supports (ISS)?
2. How familiar are you with these concepts? How and when did you first learn about them (if applicable)?
3. How has the Community School supported your understanding of these concepts (if at all)?
4. Have you been provided with professional development or learning opportunities on these concepts? If so, please describe the nature and effectiveness of these opportunities.
5. How are these concepts related to your work as a teacher/counselor/administrator at the Community School (if at all)?
6. Do you think it is necessary for schools to understand these concepts? Why or why not?
7. Do you think it is necessary for schools to implement SEL interventions? Why or why not?
8. Do you think it is necessary for schools to implement ISS initiatives? Why or why not?

Understanding and Perception of SELIS Implementation (Before Roll-out)
1. How do you define the SELIS approach to SEL?
2. How familiar are you with SELIS? How and when did you first learn about it (if applicable)?
3. How has the Community School supported your understanding of SELIS (if at all)? How has the Community School supported your understanding of SELIS implementation (if at all)?
4. Have you been provided with professional development or learning opportunities about SELIS implementation? If so, please describe the nature and effectiveness of these opportunities.
5. Do you think it is important for the Community School to implement SELIS? Why or why not?
6. How do you think SELIS will impact the students, staff, and school overall? What are your hopes for how the students, staff, and school will benefit from SELIS?

Experiences of SELIS Implementation (Before Roll-out)
1. What do you see as your specific role in SELIS implementation? What do you see as your specific responsibilities? Has the ISS Committee assigned specific responsibilities to you?
2. What are your own goals in supporting SELIS implementation as a teacher/counselor/ administrator? Please explain.
3. Do you anticipate any challenges with implementing SELIS (school or yourself)? Please explain.
4. How has the Community School supported your participation in the SELIS implementation so far (if at all)?

5. Have you been provided with professional development or learning opportunities about the SELIS implementation? If so, please describe the nature and effectiveness of these opportunities.
6. Have you integrated SEL practices in your existing work with students? Please describe.
7. Could you share an example when implementing an SEL practice went well and when it did not go well? What challenges (if any) have you encountered?
8. Have you been provided with support from the Community School to resolve these challenges (if any)? If so, please describe the nature and effectiveness of this support.
9. What are your recommendations for resolving these challenges (if any)?

Open Q: Is there anything else you would like to share in terms of SEL, ISS, or the SELIS implementation?

Appendix B

Participant Interview Protocol (Follow-up)

Understanding of SEL and ISS (After SELIS Roll-out)
1. In the context of SELIS, how do you define Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)? How do you define Integrated Student Supports (ISS)?
2. How has the Community School supported your understanding of these concepts (if at all)?
3. Have you been provided with professional development or learning opportunities on these concepts? If so, please describe the nature and effectiveness of these opportunities.
4. How are these concepts related to your work as a teacher/counselor/administrator at the Community School (if at all)?
5. Has SEL and ISS work at the school changed as a result of the transition to remote learning/instruction? Please explain.

Understanding and Perception of SELIS Implementation (After SELIS Roll-out)
1. How do you define the SELIS approach to SEL?
2. How has the Community School supported your understanding of SELIS (if at all)? How has the Community School supported your understanding of SELIS implementation (if at all)?
3. Have you been provided with professional development or learning opportunities about SELIS implementation? If so, please describe the nature and effectiveness of these opportunities.
4. Do you think it is important for the Community School to implement SELIS? Why or why not?
5. Do you think it is important to implement SELIS in the context of the transition to remote learning/instruction?
6. How do you think SELIS has impacted or will impact the students, staff, and school overall, especially in the context of the transition to remote learning/instruction?

Experiences of SELIS Implementation (After SELIS Roll-out)
1. What has been your specific role in the SELIS implementation? What have been your specific responsibilities?
2. What have been your own goals in supporting SELIS implementation as a teacher/counselor/ administrator?
3. Have you or the school encountered any challenges with implementing SELIS (if any)? Please explain.
4. Have you been provided with support from the Community School to resolve these challenges (if any)? If so, please describe the nature and effectiveness of this support.
5. What are your recommendations for resolving these challenges (if any)?
6. How has the Community School supported your participation in the SELIS implementation so far (if at all)?
7. Have you been provided with professional development or learning opportunities about the SELIS implementation? If so, please describe the nature and effectiveness of these opportunities.

8. Have you integrated SELIS in your existing practices with students? Please explain.
9. If so, could you share an example when implementing a SELIS practice went well and when it did not go well?
10. Has SELIS been helpful in the transition to remote instruction/learning? Which components of SELIS have been most useful or relevant for students, families, and/or staff? Please explain.

Open Q: Is there anything else you would like to share regarding SEL, ISS, or the SELIS implementation?

Appendix C

<u>Observation Protocol for SELIS Meetings and Trainings</u>

Event:
Date/Time:
Location:
Attendees:
Agenda:

Understanding of SELIS/SEL:	Perspectives/Experiences of SELIS/SEL:
Challenges of SELIS Implementation:	Strategies for SELIS Implementation:

Back page used to document meeting minutes and additional notes as needed.

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