

AN EXAMINATION OF THE UNITED FUTURE LEADERS PROGRAM, TEXAS TECH
UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR ADOLESCENT RESILIENCY

by
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A thesis submitted to the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies,
College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in K-12 Professional Leadership

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University of Houston
May 2020

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Dedication

To my children, Hayley, Addison, and Parker, you inspire me to be my best every day! I love you.

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars and to change the world.”

-Harriet Tubman (1820-1913)

Acknowledgments

This journey to obtain my doctorate degree has been a lifelong dream. It has been a test of not only intelligence, but of true resilience and grit. My journey through education has not always been an easy one. I struggled mightily through elementary and junior high, but as I look back now, I am truly blessed to have had amazing teachers who loved and cared for me while maintaining incredibly high standards. My high school band directors Bob Bryant, James Morris, and Don Jackson changed my life forever. They provided the positive band family I desperately needed as a fourteen-year-old freshman. This environment enabled me to flourish, not only as a musician, but as a scholar and leader as well. This experience helped me to successfully launch into college, and I have tried to create the same experience for every student and director I have had the privilege of leading throughout my career as a music educator and fine arts administrator.

To my wife Stacey and my beautiful children, Hayley, Addison, and Parker, thank you for loving me, supporting me, and inspiring me through this process! Thank you for allowing me to live out this dream and picking up the slack while I read, wrote, and attended classes. You have all sustained me through the toughest times of this journey. I hope that I have modeled that learning is a lifelong process.

It is true that you do not get to choose your parents, but I won the parent lottery. To my parents, Stuart and Carol Levin, thank you for never giving up on me, for loving me, and encouraging me my entire life. Thank you for teaching me the value and love of learning. I know the immense pride you feel in me reaching this milestone. I love you both!

To my family that is no longer here with me, but supported and loved me my whole life, thank you! I know my grandparents Morris and Thelma Reiss, Henry Levin, and my brother Todd Levin are looking down on me with a huge smile and a lot of pride!

Thank you to my amazing principals, Dr. Michael Milstead, Dr. Kaye Williams, and Lori Cox at Lamar Consolidated High School as well as my amazing band staff, Andrea Sanchez, Oscar Cano, and Mickey Traub who supported and encouraged this dream from the beginning. To my new mentors in Victoria ISD, Dr. Quintin Shepherd, Dr. Susanne Carroll, and Dr. Greg Bonewald, thank you for allowing me to put all of this knowledge into practice and for being amazing mentors through my transition from the classroom to district leadership.

To my doctorate cohort, “The Fab Five,” I cannot imagine this journey without you! Jasmin, Leticia, Shemon, and Walter, you are all true master educators and leaders. Your insight, intelligence and grace over the last three years has truly been the highlight of this program. It is my sincerest wish that our friendship and mutual admiration continues to grow for years to come.

Thank you to my thesis committee: Dr. Ruth Lopez for your passion for social justice and your love of research; Dr. Lynn Gillman-Rich for pushing me to read, learn, and truly be my best; and to Dr. Walter Bevers, thank you for believing in me as a young teacher, growing my leadership capacity, and for helping me to achieve this amazing milestone in my life! Finally, to my advisor, Dr. Keith Butcher, thank you for your countless late nights and early mornings, meeting with me on holiday breaks, “personal development conferences,” mentorship, edits, and for letting me vent and then putting me back on track. I will always be thankful and eternally grateful. Thank you for your inspiration, encouragement, and guidance throughout my professional, personal, and academic endeavors, I will always be indebted.

Abstract

Background

As the Texas legislature continues to increase state accountability, most recently with the A-F system (House Bill 22, 2017), many schools have opted to implement afterschool programs to “address the social and emotional needs of their students” (Texas Education Code (TEC) §28.002(a)(2)(C)). Research in the field of social and emotional learning (SEL) has proliferated over the past decade as an umbrella term to include “non-cognitive development, character education, 21st-century skills, and trauma-informed learning, among others” (Jones et al., 2017, p. 4). Grit, growth mindset, and social skills are all skills under the SEL umbrella, but researchers, educators, and policymakers all struggle to agree on what skills to target and to find an intervention that addresses and addresses all of these skills.

Purpose

One program that seeks to develop students’ success and resilience is the United Future Leaders (UFL) program. Research on SEL and curricular programs are plentiful, but little research is being done on the implementation of these programs across different sites. Program evaluation allows teachers, parents, and school administrators the ability to choose programs that address the social and emotional learning elements they value, implement programs with fidelity, and ensure the program is reaching its intended outcomes. Given this lack of attention to program evaluation, and more specifically to process evaluation, the purpose of this study was to examine program outcomes from three different elementary schools in the South Plains region of the West Texas area which implemented the UFL program as an after-school enrichment. This study also sought to investigate whether there were differences in site outcomes for the UFL

after-school program focused on building resiliency. Therefore, the following research questions will be explored:

1. How do study participants (program administrators and staff) describe program characteristics and implementation across individual campuses?
2. How do study participants (program administrators and staff) describe program outcomes across individual campuses?

Methods

In order to lay out a deep understanding of what transpires during an UFL course, this study used a comparative case study design employing semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the director of the UFL, assistant director of the UFL, and the UFL program coordinator, as well as the two undergraduate research facilitators and the three principals of the elementary sites included in this study. Also, data from the 2017-2018 UFL Annual Report, which summarizes the survey findings for fifth and sixth grade UFL participants during the academic year 2017-2018, informed this study. Additional data sources, such as program documents and reports were analyzed. This approach allowed for case study descriptions of each of the three elementary sites to be developed, taking into account unique contexts of each location as well as cross-cutting themes across the three sites. Following the semi-structured interviews, transcripts and notes were coded to identify themes among the three different UFL elementary sites. Interview transcripts were reviewed numerous times as the researcher “move[d] from reading to describing, classifying, and interpreting” (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). Additionally, as a form of member checking, the researcher shared transcripts and findings with study participants to confirm results. Data obtained from the interviews and the 2017-2018 UFL

Programming Research Report enabled the researcher to triangulate data results to ensure rigor (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Results

The study results are based on how participants described the program characteristics and implementation differences at individual campuses and how those participants described the outcome differences among the different campuses. As expected, the differences identified in the UFL Annual Report are not based on a single phenomenon, but a combination of training protocols for college-age student volunteers, fidelity in curriculum implementation, adequate resources, and campus administrative support.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that in order to grow the UFL program with fidelity, student volunteers must be trained on a regular and more consistent basis. Also, student volunteers must not stray from the prescribed curriculum. In addition, campuses (and districts) with administrative support for the UFL Program were more successful. Finally, additional funding sources and human resources must be obtained before the program can expand while realizing its vision of establishing environments where successful leaders can thrive.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Research on resilience differs from research on students labeled at-risk in that it seeks to find those factors that contribute to school success rather than school failure. These success factors may be personal attributes, such as self-efficacy and optimism, or environmental, such as a supportive adult relationship (Seiter, 1999). According to Werner and Smith (1992), resilience is an “innate self-righting mechanism” (p. 202).

Additionally, it is the human ability of all people to transform and change, no matter what their risk (Lifton, 1994). Resilient students are those who have been identified as at-risk of academic failure in school yet manage to succeed. These students exhibit common characteristics and perceptions that foster their success and, therefore, resilience (McMillan & Reed, 1994). The term at-risk is often challenged by scholars such as Victor Rios (2011), who challenges researchers and practitioners to re-identify the terms at-risk or dropout, and instead, look at students as at-promise. One program that seeks to develop students’ success and resilience is the United Future Leaders (UFL) program.

As the Texas legislature continues to increase state accountability, most recently with the A-F system (House Bill 22, 2018). Many schools have opted to implement after-school programs to “address the social and emotional needs of their students” (Texas Education Code (TEC) §28.002(a)(2)(C); the administrative rules adopted by the State Board of Education (SBOE); Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.1(a)(2)(C), §74.2, and §74.3).

Program evaluation allows teachers, parents, and school administrators the ability to choose programs that address the social and emotional learning elements they value, implement

programs with fidelity, and ensure the program is reaching its intended outcomes (Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2004). The purpose of this research study was to execute a program evaluation to investigate why there were differences in site outcomes for the UFL after-school program focused on building resiliency.

Background of the Study

According to the website for The Center for Adolescent Resiliency (CAR), as part of the Texas Tech University College of Human Sciences, the UFL program “provides a caring environment in which middle-school and high-school students can develop healthy academic, social, and physical habits” (Texas Tech University, 2018, Center for Adolescent Resiliency, para. 1). UFL is an after-school program through the CAR, which “focuses on civility, ethics, and leadership for fifth and sixth-grade students as they transition to middle school” (Texas Tech University, 2018, “United Future Leaders, Value Statement section). Students who participate in the program experience the curriculum designed to grow a strong foundation that becomes the building blocks for servant leadership throughout their secondary school years and beyond. The heart of the UFL program design has been an after-school leadership development program for elementary- and junior high-aged children in grades five and six. The UFL program is delivered to more than 300 youth annually at 12 host campus sites located mostly within Lubbock Independent School District (Texas Tech University, 2018). Since its inception in 2007, more than 28,026 students have participated in the UFL program. Participants of UFL complete a 30-week experience – 18 weeks during their fifth-grade school year and an additional 12 weeks in the sixth grade. At the end of their participation, UFL students “graduate” to become UFL Ambassadors for peer leadership and community engagement. According to the assistant director of CAR and Director of UFL, the UFL program frequently is requested by schools from several

rural communities in the Lubbock area. However, they have been able to deliver UFL program components to only two rural schools (both within 35 miles of Lubbock, Texas). The remaining ten schools are all part of the suburban Lubbock ISD. This level of service is possible only because of the UFL's commitment to offering a consistently high-quality program experience and through a small pool of one-time student support funds available through either state education resources or the schools themselves. To address the desire for the UFL to grow in other school districts, the program leadership has explored multiple ways to make the services accessible to a broader audience. These efforts are challenged, however, by the size of the need and the natural constraints of time and personnel. It is not merely a replication of the curriculum that is needed. Still, the strategic development of training, consulting, and program support services will make it possible to extend the UFL footprint (Texas Tech University, 2018).

In 2017, the CAR and UFL engaged Zhanxia Yang for one year to perform a research study during the tenth year of the program. The program felt that Yang's expertise was significant for data collection needed to help disaggregate data that the UFL could not complete with their small staff. Research from this report was subsequently used to inform subsequent programming regarding curriculum, assessment, and adaptation. The 2017-2018 UFL Programming Research Report summarizes the survey findings for 5th and 6th-grade UFL participants during the academic year 2017-2018 (Yang, 2018). This report is used throughout the study to show the results of the program in the areas of Positive Youth Development and Developmental Assets Profile Scale and to show differences in data between the different elementary sites in this study. Fifth graders completed the Positive Youth Development Scale (PYD) before and after their 5th-grade program, and 6th graders completed the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP). Sixth graders also completed surveys before and after their participation in the program. Results from

Yang's pre-and post-surveys and between research and non-research participants were compared.

One of the characteristics of the UFL program is creating a safe environment. The education process does not happen in isolation. Education is a partnership between students, their peers, and teachers, and includes the reinforcement of their parents (Sagor, 1996). Experiencing failure in a safe environment is how children learn (Mazzocchi, 2016). In explaining the difference between people with resiliency and those without, Coutu (2002) asked:

Why do some people suffer real hardships and not falter? Adults have all seen that happen: One person cannot seem to get the confidence back after a layoff; another, persistently depressed, takes a few years off from life after her divorce. The question educators would all like answered is, Why? What exactly is the quality of resilience that carries people through life? (p. 45)

Emotions can enhance or derail students' academic commitment, work ethic, engagement, and academic success because these relationships do affect how and what students are learning and the entire educational process (Sagor, 1996). The Resilient Model in the scholarly literature (McMillan and Reed, 1994) offers a paradigm for research into the educational success of these students. Long-term studies concerning PYD of students at risk who have faced multiple stressors emphasize the values that make the positive transformations in these students' lives. These beliefs include caring relationships with a trusting adult, environments with high expectations, and opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular/co-curricular activities (Austin, 2002). These supports, interventions, and opportunities have been linked to the increased levels of resiliency. Teachers and administrators in today's schools must address a culturally diverse student population with varied capacity for

learning and intrinsic motivation (Learning First Alliance, 2001). Teachers and administrators must find a way to teach all students with varying levels of skill and motivation.

Studies involving SEL also pursue an understanding of how the absence of connection and social-emotional competencies adversely affect scholastic performance, conduct, and health (Durlak et al., 2011). Some of these social proficiencies include compassion, judgment, and conflict resolution that can offset high-risk activities such as substance abuse, promiscuity, violence, despair, or attempted suicide (Dryfoos, 1997).

Problem Statement

The UFL at Texas Tech University conducts after-school programs at six elementary schools in the Texas South Plains area. For this study, I selected the three elementary sites that had ten or more students participating. After examining program records (attendance, retention, training, etc.) and the 2017-2018 UFL Programming Research Report, there were different outcomes regarding attendance, Positive Youth Development (competence, confidence, character, caring, and connection), as well as family involvement. In this study, I explore why these differences existed at various sites.

To examine why there were differences in outcomes across the three schools' sites, it is essential to comprehend how the program was constructed and evaluated. The following curriculum was developed by the CAR and UFL program to grow social-emotional learning in its student participants. To understand the conceptual framework, I will discuss Positive Youth Development (PYD) developed by Richard Lerner, and the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of the after-school program.

PYD is an approach to adolescent development that is strength-based and views youth as resources to be grown, developed, and nurtured. PYD emerges when the plasticity of human

development is aligned with developmental assets (Yang, 2018). While traditional youth developmental research focused on the negatives that youth should avoid, PYD is a new perspective that emphasizes positive development (Lerner, et al., 2014).

PYD was developed by Richard Lerner from Tufts University and is the guiding ideology behind many of the largest after-school programs such as 4–H, the YMCA, as well as the UFL program at Texas Tech. Lerner challenges parents, teachers, and trusted adults of adolescents to stop focusing on what students are not doing (smoking, drinking, etc.) and instead focus on what they are doing well and where they are excelling. The “5 C’s” of PYD are (a) competence (academic, social, vocational), (b) confidence (perception one can achieve personal goals), (c) connection (positive relationships), (d) character (moral compass), and (e) caring/compassion (empathy and morality). When these building blocks are achieved, they lead to a sixth “C”: contribution. (Lerner, et al., 2014) The goal is that students will grow to become adults who contribute to civic organizations and become leaders in their communities. The 4-H model uses PYD to build “internal assets” in its teens through positive encouragement, inspiration, limits and expectations, positive identity, productive use of time, dedication to learning, positive values, and social aptitudes. Providing affirming environments for teens leads to positive youth development. In explaining the necessity for youth resiliency programs for adolescent development, Lerner (2006) added:

Accordingly, the hypothesis was generated that, if the strengths of youth are aligned with resources for healthy growth present in the key contexts of adolescent development—the home, the school, and the community—then enhancements in positive functioning within time and the promotion of positive development across time can be achieved. Resilience

in the face of challenges to positive development would, then, be likely through the aligning of individual strengths and contextual resources for healthy development. (p. 45)

Thus, PYD is also an integral measurement tool in evaluating the UFL program in the 2018 UFL Programming Research Report measuring competence (with subscales academic, social, physical, and self-worth), confidence (with subscales positive identity, appearance, social conscience, and values diversity), character (with subscales conduct behavior and personal value), caring (with subscales measured by six questions directly, family and neighborhood), and connection (with subscales school and peer).

Fifth graders in the UFL program complete the Positive Youth Development Scale (PYD) before and after their 5th-grade program. Results from pre- and post-surveys and between research and non-research participants are compared. Some students completed only one survey either at the beginning or at the end of the program (Texas Tech University, 2018).

In the United States, as education and youth development are often a topic of interest to politicians and government entities at all levels, character traits such as grit, tenacity, and perseverance and how society may supplement the current educational system to instill these types of character traits into young people remain vitally important. (Shechtman, DeBarger, Dornsife, Rosier, & Yarnall, 2013). Shechtman et al.'s 2013 report makes a case for furthering character development in young people and how these traits, more so than grade point average, have become increasingly important for predicting success in college, careers, and other facets of their lives. Their report alludes to the idea that finding concrete avenues for enhancing character development traits is essential to the development of healthy future generations.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study investigated program outcomes from three different elementary schools in the South Plains region of West Texas area that implemented the UFL program as an after-school enrichment. The study examines how participants (program administrators and staff) describe program outcome differences among individual campuses, as well as how participants (program administrators and staff) describe program implementation (curriculum, program facilitation, program fidelity, and physical location) at individual campuses. Included in this study is research about who directed or facilitated the program at each school, how facilitators were trained, program fidelity regarding implementation, and the physical location of the program within the given campus.

Research Questions

1. How do study participants (program administrators and staff) describe program characteristics and implementations across campuses?
2. How do study participants (program administrators and staff) describe program outcomes across individual campuses?

Methods

This research follows a qualitative research design because it seeks to “gain an in-depth understanding of purposively selected participants from their perspective” (Patten, 2002, p. 29). Semi-structured interviews and case studies were used to understand differences in outcomes between different sites in the UFL program. Data obtained from the interviews and the 2017-2018 UFL Programming Research Report enable the researcher to triangulate data results to ensure validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Using findings from this research, along with participant feedback, will assist the UFL in replicating their program with fidelity.

In describing the role of semi-structured interviews in qualitative research, Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey (2004) state, “One method of data collection that has become very common in program evaluations is semi-structured interviews with administrators, staff, and program customers, conducted to document various aspects of a program or agency” (p. 363). This qualitative analysis will employ semi-structured interviews with the director of the UFL, assistant director of the UFL and the UFL program coordinator as well as the two undergraduate research facilitators and the three principals of the elementary sites to collect and report data. Formal semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to prepare questions in advance as well as the latitude to ask probing questions as the conversation unfolds (Bhattacharya, 2017). Using this approach enables the researcher to ask prepared questions while having the flexibility to address unexpected directions throughout the interview. Also, questioning makes it easier for the researcher to compare responses for each question asked among all participants in the study (Bhattacharya, 2017).

As part of this qualitative study, I developed in-depth case studies for each of the three elementary sites used by the UFL. Additionally, data was collected from interviews performed with the director of the UFL, assistant director of the UFL, and the UFL program coordinator as well as the two undergraduate research facilitators and the three principals of the elementary sites, along with publicly accessible data such as the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) to understand successes and challenges specific to the unique circumstances of each location. According to Creswell (2013), “case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case themes” (p.

97). Creswell further explains that when creating case studies, a single case can be determined, or multiple cases discovered can be compared with one another. This qualitative case study seeks to isolate each of the three sites in the UFL and explain similarities and differences found in the 2017-2018 UFL Programming Research Report.

A process evaluation was used to investigate the differences in data from the three elementary sites used by the UFL program. According to Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey (2004), “Carefully developed logic models have the potential to improve service provision or program management because the model, or plan, incorporates a theoretical understanding of how different actions or steps interact to produce certain outcomes. If outcomes are less than acceptable, staff and managers can use the logic model, to diagnose problem points, and suggest improvement strategies” (p. 370).

Significance of the Study

The purpose of the UFL is to enhance student resilience and provide participants with the expertise to be successful throughout their secondary education and beyond. This study investigates the degree to which PYD increased for students participating in the UFL program as well as researches the characteristics at each site that caused variations in student and program outcome data. Findings may also help inform other programs like it into schools in different districts and states.

Findings of this study may stimulate administrators in the area, across the State of Texas, and the country to evaluate and apply resiliency stratagems to nurture talent development in all students so that they may grow their skills and have the opportunity to be successful scholastically and socially in their school, home, and community environments (Austin, 2002).

Research on SEL and curricular programs is plentiful. Still, only a small amount of research has been done on the implementation of these programs across different sites or an evaluation of the effectiveness of program design. Given this lack of attention to program evaluation and, more specifically, to process evaluation, the purpose of this study was to examine program outcomes from three different elementary schools in the South Plains region of the West Texas area that implemented the UFL program as an after-school enrichment.

Definition of Terms

At-risk refers to adolescents who may experiment with negative role identities and risky forms of behavior while transitioning into adulthood (Resnick & Burt, 1996).

Grit is defined as not giving up in response to failure or adversity and the ability to set and achieve long term goals (Duckworth, 2017).

Positive youth development (PYD) is a positive behavior development based around the Five Cs: Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring (Lerner et al., 2014).

Program theory is the hypothesis that the program's design, activities, and execution will lead to the attainment of the outcomes you intend for your program, school, students, and teachers ("An Introduction to Program Theory," 2019).

Resilience is defined as a person "achieving positive outcomes despite risk" (Brooks 2006, p. 69).

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is defined as an assortment of aptitudes, and intellectual abilities that students must obtain to negotiate successfully through school and life's challenges (Masten, 2001).

Self-efficacy is defined as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura 1986, p. 391).

Self-determination theory (SDT) was formulated by Richard Ryan and Edward Deci of the University of Rochester and sought to explain the types of motivation as opposed to the amount of motivation it takes to maximize the performance of human beings (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Limitations of the Study

This study has the following limitations:

1. Students who participated in the UFL were not representative of all Lubbock ISD or West Texas schools.
2. The sample was not randomly selected because participants are self-selected into the UFL program on a volunteer basis.
3. Each site is subject to its specific instructors with varying differences in age and teaching experience.
4. Instructors who facilitate the UFL curriculum may have used different styles which could potentially produce different outcomes.
5. Some students completed the PYD survey either at the beginning or at the end of the program. Thus, score averages reported may not be truly reflective of all 5th grade participants and the effect of the UFL program.

Organization

Chapter One has offered the background and context to the study, defined the problem in the research study, described the purpose, proposed research questions, provided an overview of

the methodology and significance of the research, and defined the terms used in the study.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature on resilience and resiliency programs, grit, self-determination theory, and positive youth development. Chapter Three investigates the research methodology, the design, data collection, and an analysis of data. Chapter Four reports the findings from the qualitative research study, and Chapter Five reviews the findings and makes recommendations for practice and further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, and literature associated with resilience, grit, self-efficacy, self-determination theory, positive youth development, and the significance of employing social-emotional learning skills through the use of character education in a traditional school setting and after-school programs. This phenomenon has relevance for this program and study because it adds to the growing empirical research that policymakers, educators, and communities can add to the healthy development of our children by implementing evidence based SEL programs as part of educational curriculum and practice.

Theoretical Framework

Program Theory is centered on the hypothesis that a program's design, undertakings, and implementation will lead to the attainment of the results you intend for the after-school program, school, students, and teachers ("An Introduction to Program Theory," 2019, para. 2). Program Theory evaluation (PTE) contains an explicit theory or model of how the program bases the intended outcomes and an assessment partially directed by this model. The purpose of using a PTE is to test which variables in the program are causing the results. The success of Program Theory in the field requires a fundamental understanding of the area, and the creation of a strong Program Theory should be created by the program planner, not the evaluator (Rogers, Hacsı, Petrosino, & Huebner, 2000).

Program Theory also provides a "conceptual structure" which acts as a plan of action so "the logic that connects its activities to the intended outcomes, and the rationale for why it does what it does" (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004, p. 44). This structure will differ contingent on

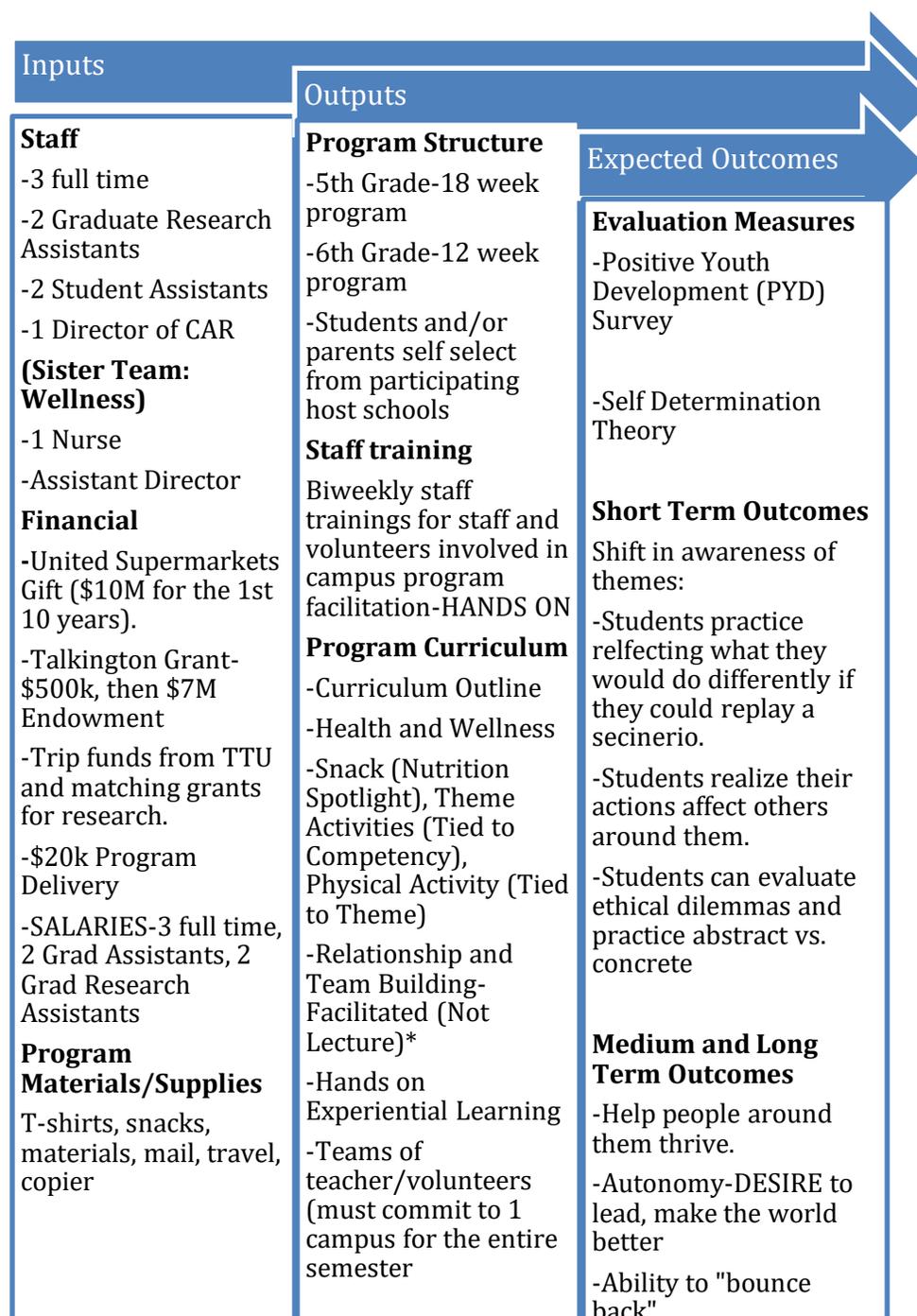
the magnitude of the organization, organizational structure, established routines, intervention or service provided, and intended outcomes. All factors affect data collection and organization as well as implications for the evaluation plan, including the effort and resources required for completion.

According to Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey (2004), it is crucial to build a framework that defines and categorizes data collected in the field. Figure 1 below depicts an implementation framework that documents and assesses factors that influence program outcomes. This framework considers factors that are out of the control of the program administrators, organizers, and facilitators and affect how the program is structured and designed. This model allows the researcher to stay organized and focused without becoming lost in the multitude of details.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual program model for the UFL (see Figure 1) can be broken down into three parts: inputs, outputs, and outcomes (Gonzales, G. & Nunez, C. personal communication, July 12, 2018).

Figure 1: United Future Leaders Program Model*



*Developed by the author based on interviews with Gonzales, G. & Nunez, C., July 12, 2018

Inputs for the UFL consisted of program investments such as staff, which included three full-time staff members, two graduate research assistants, two student assistants, and the director of the CAR. The sister staff (who focus on wellness) includes a nurse and assistant director. The financial investment piece of the input model encompassed grants from United Supermarkets and the Talkington Foundation, Texas Tech University matching gifts for research and program delivery. There are also program expenses such as t-shirts, snacks, materials, travel, and copier. Outputs expected from these investments were the results of an eighteen-week program for fifth-grade students and a twelve-week program for sixth-grade students. Students and parents self-selected into the program from participating host schools in Lubbock ISD and surrounding rural districts. Besides, four to five staff pieces of training per week are available for staff and volunteers involved in campus program facilitation through hands-on, face-to-face training.

A curriculum outline has been designed both for training and facilitating on multiple elementary and middle school campuses. Healthy snacks (nutrition spotlight), themed activities tied to competence, and physical activities linked to the lesson plan are also incorporated. Relationship and team building activities are facilitated, not lectured, to create a hands-on experiential learning experience for students involved in the UFL program. Teams of teachers and volunteers must also commit to one campus for the entire semester. The goal of any logic model is that inputs and outputs lead to short term-, medium-, and long-term outcomes to determine the value of the overall program (Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2004). Results for the UFL program are supported by the PYD survey and self-determination theory. Short term outcomes include a shift and awareness of themes. In fifth grade, these include a building up of self to think outside the box and for sixth-grade students, a focus on ethical dilemmas and practicing the difference between abstract and concrete. Students also discussed, “What if you

had a take two? What would you change?” Medium and long-term outcomes would include helping people around them to thrive, developing autonomy, and the ability to rebound in the face of adversity (Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2004).

Synthesis of Research

Many challenges are facing public schools in our community, state, and across our nation. Students experiencing the effects of poverty and students of color are still receiving an inferior education (Noguera, 2008). Also, Weissberg and O’Brien (2004) assert:

Producing students who are intellectually reflective and committed to lifelong learning, they want quality education that results in students who relate in socially skilled, respectful, and constructive ways with other young people and adults; engage in positive and safe health practices; contribute ethically and responsibly to their peer group, family, school, and community; and acquire basic competencies, work habits, and values as a foundation for meaningful employment. (pp. 86-87)

Teachers, administrators, school boards, parents, and community members are forced to make difficult decisions in finding a balance of academic education and building children into positive and productive young adults. Therefore, adding SEL programs that address resilience, grit, self-efficacy, self-determination theory, positive youth development, and the significance of employing social, emotional learning skills through the use of character education in a traditional school setting and after-school programs has become paramount in public schools.

Resilience

Resiliency theory emerged as a compelling explanation that specific individuals can overcome the effects of severe, even multiple psychosocial risk factors (Fraser & Richman, 2001). Researchers in education and psychology agree that adults (parents, teachers, and

caregivers) play a significant role in developing and fostering protective factors that grow and build resilient young people. Additionally, young people must have a sense of hope that the condition in which they are currently living does not determine their future.

Victor Rios (2011) challenges scholars and practitioners re-identify the terms *at-risk* or *dropout*, and instead look at students as at-promise. Additionally, in his 2016 TED Talk, Rios challenged his audience to “rid ourselves of deficit perspectives” (Rios, 2016, minute 1:25). Instead, Rios suggests that schools should look at students as people who have something to offer rather than a vessel that needs to be filled. Similarly, instead of asking, “What can I do in my classroom and school to prevent my students from getting in trouble with alcohol, tobacco, drugs, gangs, as well as early pregnancy and unsafe sexual practices,” Bernard (1995) argues that educators should consider students and their experiences as a valuable asset (p. 20). Bernard asserts resilience research distinctly shows to all professionals who work with young people the following key points: “(a) most youth ‘make it,’ (b) all individuals have the power to transform and change, (c) teachers and schools have the ability to transform lives, (d) it’s how we do what we do that counts, and (e) teachers’ beliefs in innate capacity start the change process” (p. 20). In explaining the necessity for resiliency programs and seeing students as assets and not at-risk, Kiswarday (2012) asserted:

The premise of a resiliency program is that when a protective environment is established, and protective factors are increased, school climate and attendance will improve as well as students’ academic achievement. Students will be less vulnerable to becoming involved in inappropriate behaviors. In the school, context resilience may well promote a shift from an at-risk focused point of view to the child. This switches teachers from

seeing children and their families through a deficit lens to a more holistic view that also includes strengths and capacities. (p. 98)

This idea is powerful because it addresses the student, their family, and the teacher. When students' social and emotional needs are being met, academic achievement and behavior increase, and the teacher seeks to teach and understand children as well as the life story they bring with them to school.

Additionally, Lynette Busceme (2007) insists, "expertise of teachers regarding the developmental needs of young adolescents must be enhanced by an understanding of the attributes of resilience, a necessary, on-going reality of both teachers and students in middle schools" (p. 12). Coutu (2002) asserts, resilient individuals have three traits: "a staunch acceptance of reality; a deep belief, often buttressed by strongly held values, that life is meaningful; and an uncanny ability to improvise" (p. 48). Further, people can rebound from adversity with just one or two of these assets, but true resiliency will only be achieved with all three assets. Additionally, these three traits hold for resilient groups. (Coutu, 2002). Masten (2001) offers two models of resilience studies: variable-focused and person-focused. Variable-focused studies use statistics to measure the amount of risk or adversity. In contrast, the person-focused approach uses qualitative profiles. It seeks to understand what makes resilient children different from other groups of students by "providing researchers links between predictors and outcomes that have implications for interventions" (Masten, 2001, p. 229).

Even though resilience is the new buzz word in not only education and psychology, but business and industry as well, academic research into resilience began forty-five years ago at the University of Minnesota (Coutu, 2002). In this research, children of schizophrenic parents, despite growing up in a dysfunctional environment, did not suffer psychological illness (Coutu,

2002). Beginning in the 1980s, the focus of research began to shift from psychopathology to one of prevention and intervention (Patterson, 2001). By the early 1990s, it was suggested by Freiberg (1994) that the existing literature built a case for establishing protective strategies to encourage greater resilience as opposed to focusing on risk factors alone. Studying resilience-promoting factors is currency that runs across disciplines. Anita Hunter (2001), a pediatric nursing expert working in the human services delivery realm, writes “overcoming adversities and being resilient were different depending on the presence or absence of consistent, loving, caring, mentoring adults who helped the adolescent traverse the adversities of life” (p. 172). Benard (1991) has said resilience is naturally healthy human development. She identified four categories of indications of resilience: (a) social competence, (b) problem solving, (c) autonomy, and (d) a sense of purpose. Masten (2001) confirms that there is a small set of overarching factors associated with resilience. She concludes that “the great surprise of resilience research is the ordinariness of the phenomena” (p. 227). Also, if protective systems are in place, positive outcomes can be expected, even in the face of severe adversity; when these systems are compromised, there is a higher risk for developmental problems.

Durlak et al. (2011) published a meta-analysis of 213 schools based, universal social and emotional learning (SEL) programs involving 270,034 K-12 grade students. Compared to the controls, SEL student participants did show considerable elevated social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviors, and scholastic accomplishment that was reflected by an 11% gain in achievement (Durlak et al., 2011). The teachers in this study successfully employed the SEL program by using the four recommended practices to achieve the desired results and improve SEL.

Werner and Smith (1993), in their longitudinal studies, recognized that the attributes of resiliency rise across all races, ethnicities, genders, and time. Though resilience research started to understand the extraordinary, it has revealed that ordinary children exhibit resilience in their minds, brains, and bodies and is often influenced and nurtured by their families, connections, and in the areas where they reside (Masten, 2001). This research offers researchers and educators alike an optimistic view that resilience can be “protected, restored, facilitated, and nurtured in the lives of children” (p. 235).

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), was developed by Richard Ryan and Edward Deci of the University of Rochester, seeks to explain the types of motivation as opposed to the amount of motivation it takes to maximize the performance of human beings (Ryan and Deci, 2000). SDT is based on several paramount psychological theories including Skinner’s Social-Learning Theory (1953), Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory (1996), Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski’s Terror Management Theory (1997), Carver and Scheier’s Control Theory (1998), and Csikszentmihalyi’s Flow Theory (1975). Deci and Ryan (2000) argue that controlled motivation, doing something for a reward or avoiding punishment, is not as productive as autonomous motivation, doing what people feel interested in, find enjoyment in, or value. They assert that autonomous motivation will result in higher performance because all humans have a psychological need for competency, relatedness (or self and others), and autonomy.

Autonomy is a basic human need that is necessary for optimal social wellness and performance (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation builds on interests and enjoyments as well as deeply held values for an optimal outcome. They are juxtaposed to extrinsic motivation, which leads to consequences. In education, students will learn in a more profound way when

teachers focus on students' enjoyment of learning, just as athletes will perform at a higher level when coaches focus on developing a sense of team. Humans cannot and will not have a close relationship if they don't feel autonomous (Ryan and Deci, 2000). SDT is built on the nutrients of intrinsic motivation that includes autonomy, competence, and relatedness. SDT asserts that intrinsic motivation is developed after these three building blocks are in place, not as a precursor to learning.

Ryan's research in self-determination theory has outlined the methods through which extrinsic motivation can become self-directed, and his study suggests that intrinsic motivation (based in interest) and self-directed extrinsic motivation (based in importance) are both linked to performance, contentment, belief, and welfare in the workplace (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Therefore, SDT's desire to move people from motivation to autonomy is an ideal lens and evaluation rubric to consider grit and resilience for UFL students as well as program success. According to the 2018 UFL Programming Research Report, SDT identifies three psychological needs that underlie all processes of intra- and inter-personal development: the need for autonomy, the need for competence, and the need for relatedness (Texas Tech University, 2018). When all three requirements are fulfilled, people are more likely to thrive, as in attaining optimal development, well-being, vitality, integrity, and mental well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Conversely, when a need or combination of needs is thwarted, individuals may experience a variety of adverse psychological and dysfunctional outcomes (Ryan and Deci, 2000). However, when the support is lacking or absent, the individual will develop compensatory self-protecting processes and need substitutes that steer the person toward non-optimal development (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Often these compensatory substitutions create circumstances that further hinder the person from accessing the necessary support.

SDT has also been used to support research studies, including a 1995 report seeking to understand whether the motivation is related to academic achievement. Karsenti and Thibert (1995) completed a research study of 1428 inner-city junior high and high school students in Quebec (Montreal) ranging in age from 12-18. Approximately 40% of the students were Minorities: Hispanic, Black, and Asian. The study used the Academic Motivation Scale, based on SDT. The study differentiated that “amotivation,” which was defined as no link between actions and outcomes was perceived as “intrinsic motivation,” where goals of efforts go beyond the activity as a whole. Primarily, this study found that motivation was directly linked to a grade point average (GPA). However, results were not the same for males and females or middle school and high school students. Amotivation was found to be a strong predictor in success among females and middle school students, while intrinsic motivation was a more significant forecaster of high school-aged students and males. Therefore, a conclusion can be made from their research that development and SDT motivation in males and females should be an essential goal for educators, as well as further studies into motivation to help identify students at-risk.

Building a Positive School Climate

According to Durlak et al. (2011), “a key challenge for 21st-century schools involves serving culturally diverse students with varied abilities and motivations for learning” (p. 405). Research shows mentoring and student resilience can support achievement when students, community organizations, and churches provide positive role models and social support through after-school and summer school programs (Noguera, 2008). A teacher should never seek to teach purely learned skills, but also be a confident and encouraging model for students to emulate in the future (Kiswarday, 2012). *School climate* is the quality of the school environment experienced by the students, teachers, and administrators; it is based on the collective assessment

and experiences of behavior in schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Discipline management within a school is intimately tied to expectations set forth by school administrators. Benard (1991) provides insight into how individuals in middle schools might establish and correspond to high prospects for all students. She implies that messages from staff to students must reflect a “can-do” spirit with acknowledgment of the hard work real success might involve. The expectations should be relative to behavioral expectations, as well as those that are reflective of high achievement standards.

Setting extraordinary expectations and expecting exceptional student outcomes also implies high hopes for the staff of K-12 schools. With these expectations must come the opportunities for teaming, job-sharing, and celebration of those going beyond minimal requirements (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Purkey and Novak (1998) claimed that “student success or failure is related to how students perceive themselves and their environment—and that the prevailing nature of the messages influences these perceptions they receive in school” (p. 37). Building principals have everything (hiring, placing, retiring, and removing) to do with making sure specific individuals are in place within schools will who send messages of care and concern for all students on their campuses.

Fullan (2011) stresses that transparency is also a crucial component of school climate, and “norms that encourage and value critical feedback from all team members, especially those with less status, are essential” (p. 138). In his book, *Change Leader*, Fullan (2011) compares school norms in leadership to the cockpit of an airplane and doctors on a surgical team. Both have gotten safer over time because norms have changed such that when junior members in the cockpit or surgical theater know something is wrong, they have been empowered to speak up, question decisions made by senior staff members, and save lives. Positive and transparent school

climate must also involve empowering the entire school staff: Veteran teachers, rookie teachers, paraprofessionals, custodial staff, and cafeteria workers feel comfortable to speak up when they feel things are going wrong and value their input to improve the overall climate of the building and student learning.

A collaboration between the University of Twente and thirty-three schools in the Netherlands developed a Positive Education Programme (PAP) to employ a school-wide structure designed to encourage children's welfare and contentment while creating an encouraging school climate (Elfrink, Goldberg, Schreurs, Bohlmeijer, & Clarke, 2017). A subsequent study of 184 children was then done in 2014-2015, implementing the PEP program into two primary schools (ages 4-12) in the Netherlands. One of the schools in the study was classified as rural, and the other was urban. Both schools received the framework for the program, which focused on the core values of PEP: values, life rules, well-being and engagement, and parent engagement. School personnel were trained through a series of workshops, and strategies were developed to address the needs of the students at each specific campus. When teachers felt a student fell below a certain threshold of well-being or engagement, they were empowered to apply a research-based intervention to raise the child's level of proficiency. The program offered an online database with over 100 activities for teachers to choose from these targeted skills. The overall goal of the study according to Elfrink, et al. (2017) was to "examine how PEP was implemented in the two schools and the impact of the program on pupils' social and emotional skills from the perspective of the teachers and parents" (p. 217). Based on interviews with children before and after the study, the results of the PEP program showed a meaningful, encouraging effect on welfare and problem behavior. There was also a decrease in self-reported victimization between the pre- and post-interventions. Younger children

in the study showed a more substantial effect on health-related quality than older children did. Teachers involved in the study also reported positively both to the training and implementation. Also, they credited PEP with being an essential supplement to their school and wanted to continue the program in the future. Generally, these results showed initial proof concerning the positive effect of the PEP on student's welfare and personal ownership and the positive culture within the school.

Grit and Mindset

Grit and mindset are fundamental to the UFL program and have become critical areas in research and among education practitioners alike. Student motivation is an essential component of academic and emotional development. Grit and mindset research find that student motivation and potential for success are not fixed and can be grown in students of all developmental levels.

Angela Duckworth defines grit as not giving up in response to failure or adversity (2017). She describes gritty people as those who have long-term goals with love and passion that endures. According to Perkins-Gough (2013), Duckworth stated that grit is "related [to resilience] because part of what it means to be gritty is to be resilient in the face of failure or adversity. But that's not the only trait you need to be gritty" (p. 14).

Duckworth looks at education through the lens of psychology and student motivation instead of IQ as the sole predictor of student success in the educational realm and in their adult life as well. She famously tested her "grit scale" in a variety of areas, including West Point, where she studied which military cadets stayed in basic training and which ones dropped out. West Point boasts some of the most rigorous admission criteria to whittle their 10,000 annual applicants down to the 4000 that are accepted (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). In addition to GPA and test scores, applicants must also complete the ACT Plus Writing,

physical assessment, and the Army's qualifying medical exam to be considered for admission (Perkins-Gough, 2013). In 2007, Duckworth surveyed 1,218 cadets and applied her grit scale to understand why some of the highly vetted recruits would succeed in the high-pressure freshman summer training program and why others failed (Perkins-Gough, 2013). She also analyzed results from the Scripps National Spelling Bee to accurately predict which children were more likely to advance in the competition and which ones would be eliminated. Duckworth has also affiliated with corporations in the private sector and questioned supervisors to establish which sales personnel would be most likely to desert the corporation and which ones would be effective. She also examined records from rookie teachers from urban elementary schools to gauge who would not return after their initial year and, of those who did return, which teachers met their students' learning objectives. After disaggregating data from and across varied subjects and environments, one characteristic arose as a substantial forecaster of achievement: grit. Duckworth asserts that grit can be developed from the inside out and the outside in through four steps: interest, practice, purpose, and hope. Grit and resilience are thought to be central in developing an individual's character and their ability to persevere through hardship and complete projects over an extended period (Davidson, 2016). *Parent* means to "bring forth," and Duckworth (2017) expands this to mean all supporters of children, but especially teachers. It is the job of teachers, administrators, mentors, and caring adults in a student's life to ignite passion and perseverance as a part of their character development. Additionally, as children move from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood, their autonomy to grow, learn, and excel independently should also be on an upward trajectory.

In his book *Peak*, author Anders Ericsson (2017) seeks to answer the question of what makes great people great. Ericsson states that all humans differentiate themselves because we

were all given the gift of adaptability. The practice is not enough. If it is naive practice, it must be purposeful practice. The practice must be deliberate, whether it is sports, music, or even chess, and mental reps are necessary to make changes to practice. Similar to Angela Duckworth, Ericsson (2017) developed a four-step process for self-improvement: (a) goal, (b) focused, (c) feedback, and (d) comfort. Specifically, he says that people need to know precisely how they want to improve. They need to have a long-term target, and then smaller, more achievable components and then set goals of how to accomplish each of the aspects to reach their ultimate goal. Being intensely focused on what people are doing, Ericsson argues, is necessary to trigger adaptability. Also, immediate feedback is needed on personal progress; that way, adjustments can be made on what is working or not working. Finally, Ericsson also argues that it is necessary to leave one's comfort zone to trigger ultimate adaptability.

Researchers such as Jachimowicz, Wihler, Bailey, Galinsky (2018) argue that “although grit is defined as the combination of perseverance and passion, its measurement has focused on perseverance and has not adequately captured passion” (p. 1). Their meta-analysis of 127 studies and two field studies (n=45,485) found that passion was an essential component of grit. Their study defines passion as “a strong feeling toward a personally important value/preference that motivates intentions and behaviors to express that value/preference” (Jachimowicz et al., 2018, p. 1). They propose that merging the grit scale, which merely measures perseverance, with a range to quantify persons' preferred quantities of passion, will be a better predictor of performance. Further, by quantifying both perseverance and passion, the inquiry can uncover “grit's true predictive power” (Jachimowicz et al., 2018, p. 1).

As Duckworth's research continued to develop and increase, she learned that Carol Dweck was performing an analysis to establish in what way a fixed idea that failure is

everlasting and might preclude school-aged children from achieving long term scholastic achievement (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). Duckworth (2017) determined that grit might be grown by developing a growth mindset. Dweck's studies (2006) validated that coaching young children how the brain is adept of transformation when faced with barriers in life or school and encouraged them to persist and cultivate a growth mindset--"whether they see their intelligence as something that's fixed or something that can grow and change—has profound effects on their motivation, learning, and school achievement" (Dweck 2008, p. 1). Dweck, when describing great teachers, exclaims, "great teachers believe in the growth of the intellect and talent, and they are fascinated with the process of learning" (p. 194). Dweck (2010) further states, "Individuals with a fixed mindset believe that their intelligence is simply an inborn trait - they have a certain amount, and that's that. In contrast, individuals with a growth mindset believe that they can develop their intelligence over time" (p. 16). This realization is profound because Duckworth and Dweck agree that grit, resilience, and mindset are characteristics that can be developed to help students, teachers, and parents change their perceptions that failure is permanent and intelligence is fixed (Perkins-Gough, 2013). Lerner (2006) concurs, stating that positive human development is grounded in developmental systems theory and is "an emphasis on individual strengths (e.g., the possession of relative plasticity across the lifespan)" (pp. 42-43).

Duckworth attests that grit can be developed from the inside out and the outside in through four steps: Interest, practice, purpose, and hope. Further, "grit" is having sustained passion and stamina (Duckworth 2017). Grit is hard work and the capacity to set goals over an extended period (Duckworth 2017). Grit and resilience are thought to contain a person's character and include their ability to persevere through hardship while staying on task to complete projects over long periods (Davidson, 2016).

Out-of-School Time SEL Programs

Hurd and Deutsch (2017) write that despite the potential of out-of-school SEL programs, they have not made a significant influence on the field of SEL. Their research focuses on many of the internal and external factors that can be problematic for programs that meet before or after the traditional school day. One of these factors is attendance. When attendance is not mandatory, it makes it hard for researchers to differentiate a program's outcomes from their attributes that may have led the student to sign up for the program initially. Attendance does not negate research that many out-of-school programs do promote and foster desired SEL outcomes. Research focuses on how policy could enhance these programs more effectively. Personal relationships between teachers and students is essential in any learning environment. Therefore, building positive relationships between staff and participants is the "linchpin of effective after-school programs targeting SEL outcomes" (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017, p. 95). Second, as the public-school system focuses more on high stakes testing, out-of-school programs, too, are being asked to quantify their academic impact on their student participants. SEL research, including this study, argues that overemphasizing standardized testing leads to the neglect of SEL and adversely affects students from becoming productive and well-adjusted adults. Hurd and Deutsch propose a mind shift where "evaluation would focus less on whether programs 'work' and instead seek ways to make them work better" (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017, p. 95).

The expansion of the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers, which is a \$1.2 billion federal grant program under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has forced a paradigm shift in priorities from "gym and swim" after-school programs to programs that offer academic enrichment for students (Mitchell, 2019). This shift has left providers the challenge of providing targeted professional development to support teachers and staff members who exhibit that they

are competent to teach and facilitate curriculum. Local college students are being recruited to help facilitate lessons on subjects such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) into SEL curriculums outside the traditional school day.

The National AfterSchool Association devised a training and certification system to identify talents and skills that students and potential employees bring with them (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017). In place of semester-long classes or professional development workshops, the training program uses micro-credentials that permit aspiring facilitators to show mastery or proficiency in a specific course(s). Students in the program can choose micro-credentials from a list that are related to their goals, professional desires, or the urgencies of the school or program. These micro-credentials are accessible to personnel who want to teach STEM curriculum and can verify their aptitude to facilitate content and connect with children by bringing in their own life experiences. The association plans to add certifications for SEL, literacy, digital learning, and emotional intelligence for potential program leaders. This system of micro-credentials could potentially save time and money as well as enhancing providers' ability to hire highly qualified staff while they have otherwise struggled with team recruiting and retention.

In comparison, the Wisconsin Youth Company staff typically spend 40 hours of training before they can facilitate a class and an additional 30 hours during the school year (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017). To incentivize training, they pay for staff development, training, and time off to finish the practice in order to recruit and retain qualified staff. However, The National AfterSchool Association program is changing the training model by focusing on competency rather than seat time. They argue that micro-credentials might remove red tape and help recruit more experienced and enthusiastic staff to work with students. In the State of Connecticut, EdAdvance has made a targeted effort to recruit college education and social work majors who

need and want to experience interacting with school-aged children. They also target retired educators who still want to work and mentor students. Site managers for Right at School in Evanston, Illinois, focuses on recruiting college students that are passionate about working with children because they attest it is the one skill that is hard to train (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017). The Boys and Girls Club of America asserts that recruiting qualified staff members starts with creating and writing the job description (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017). Moving from students interested in STEM and limiting the quest to include individuals who have familiarity with either computer programming or applied science could be the deciding factor when potential college students are applying for the job. Continuous learning and training are paramount to the success of any after-school program providing academic enrichment (Mitchell, 2019).

During March of 2017, the Harvard Graduate School of Education, in conjunction with financing from the Wallace Foundation, conducted a comprehensive study of the twenty-five leading SEL programs (Jones et al., 2017). The research intended to fill a void that there were currently no resources that looked within various SEL programs to see how they vary and what sets each program apart in its distinctive way. Research into SEL programs shows proof of positive student outcomes, including improved behavior, attitudes, and academics, however little is known about “the specific skills strategies and programmatic features that drive those positive outcomes” (Jones et al., 2017, p. 7). Three of the twenty-five programs studied were Out-of-School Time (OST) SEL Programs, meaning they primarily focused on delivering curricula outside of the traditional school day.

One of the programs, “Before the Bullying” is a K-8 prevention program that focuses on preventing bullying by teaching social skills such as acceptance, friendship, teamwork, empathy, and responsibility through songs, films, and various other performing arts (Jones et al., 2017).

Students participate in a five-week program, consisting of a daily lesson lasting 30-60 minutes. This program emphasizes SEL proficiencies and primarily incorporates emotional practices, interpersonal skills, and character development into their curriculum. It is important to note that there was no evidence of effectiveness included in the Harvard study, and there were no evaluations for the Before the Bullying program. This report included no results on program implementation.

Another program evaluated in the Harvard study, “Girls on the Run,” is a 3-8 grade physical activity program constructed on the PYD model. In addition to running, this program seeks to teach young girls skills such as self-care, self-awareness, self-knowledge, teamwork, healthy relationships, and empowerment. Students participate in a ten-week program consisting of two 75- to 90-minute lessons a week. This program focuses on SEL skills and primarily incorporates interpersonal skills, character, and mindset into their curriculum. Girls on the Run has been assessed for indications of success in numerous quasi-experimental and non-experimental analyses, measured primarily by student self-reports. This program was evaluated across the United States, including the Southern, Midwestern, Northeast, and Pacific regions. At least 33% of the students involved in the program nationwide qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. According to the evaluation and self-reports, students made noticeable improvements “in character, caring, self-esteem, self-confidence, positive connections with others, body size satisfaction, physical self-concept, running self-concept, commitment to physical activity, physical activity levels, frequency of physical activity, and positive attitude toward physical activity” (Jones et al., 2017, p. 271). Also, there was a reduction in lethargic activities (TV and screen time). This report included no results on program implementation.

The final out of school SEL program in the Harvard study, “Wings for Kids,” is a K-5 program that uses college students serving in the AmeriCorps program to serve as mentors for their comprehensive SEL course to encourage constructive conduct and performance, conscientious decision making, and wholesome relationships among children participating in the curriculum (Jones et al., 2017). Student participants gather three hours daily, five days a week, for this year-long program. Also, each Friday, students participate in a 90-minute WildWINGS lesson, which uses competitions, conversations, and scenarios to discover the correlation between thoughts, emotions, and actions. This program focuses on SEL skills and primarily incorporates interpersonal skills and emotional processes into their curriculum. Wings for Kids has been evaluated for verification of success in multiple quasi-experimental and non-experimental analyses as well as randomized control trials: these studies used report cards, surveys, and IQ tests. The randomized control trial was underwritten by the Institute of Education Sciences for three years and was still underway when the report was published in 2017. This program was evaluated in urban areas that were African American and where 95% of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch. According to the most recent five evaluations, students made noticeable gains “in respect, adherence to classroom and school rules, on-time completion of homework and school assignments, respect for classroom materials, executive function, visual-spatial skills, numerical literacy, self-esteem, satisfaction with school, and increased grades in math, social studies, music, science, health, and ELA scores” (Jones et al., 2017, p. 280). This report included no results on program implementation.

Summary

Research in the field of SEL has snowballed over the past decade as an umbrella term to include “non-cognitive development, character education, 21st-century skills, and trauma-informed learning, among others” (Jones et al., 2017, p. 4). Grit, growth mindset, and social skills are all skills under the SEL umbrella. Still, researchers, educators, and policymakers struggle to agree on what skills to target and to find a program that addresses all of these skills. However, as Duckworth argues, SEL skills such as resilience and grit can be taught and developed over time (2017). Psychological frameworks such as PYD and SDT have been developed and tested in schools are used to create meaningful SEL programs during and after the traditional school day.

The focus on SEL research and curricular programs have primarily focused on defining the field, which programs fall under the SEL umbrella, and which behaviors can or should be changed. Still, only a small amount of research has been done on the implementation of these programs across different sites or evaluations of the effectiveness of program design.

Given this lack of attention to program evaluation and, more specifically, to process evaluation, the purpose of this study was to investigate program outcomes from six different elementary schools in the South Plains region of the West Texas area that implemented the UFL program as an after-school enrichment. An analysis of the case studies created for each site in this study as well as interviews conducted will examine how participants (program administrators and staff) describe program outcome differences among individual campuses as well as how participants (program administrators and staff) describe program implementation (curriculum, program facilitation, program fidelity, and physical location) at individual

campuses. The following chapter discusses the research methodology used as well as a justification of the process evaluation used in this research study.

Chapter 3

Methods

My research followed a qualitative research design because I sought to “gain an in-depth understanding of purposively selected participants from their perspective” (Patten, 2002). Semi-structured interviews were used over an extended period to understand differences in outcomes among three different sites in the UFL program. Data obtained from the interviews, TEA TAPR report, and the 2017-2018 UFL Programming Research Report enabled me to triangulate data (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and create complete descriptions for each of the sites in the study. Using findings from this research based on participant feedback will assist the UFL in implementing their program with fidelity in the future. This chapter includes the research questions, research design, participant selection, data collection, researcher role, data analysis, limitations, validity and reliability, and summary.

The focal point of this research is to use semi-structured interviews and additional information from a variety of sources to understand differences in outcomes between different sites in the UFL program. The differences in data can be particularly crucial in implementing the program with fidelity in multiple schools throughout the Lubbock, Texas, and West Texas areas. To describe the methods used in this study, the following information is included in this chapter: selection of research sites, case study design, the use of semi-structured interviews, and the treatment of data.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study investigated program outcomes from three different elementary schools in the South Plains region of West Texas area which implemented the UFL program as an after-school enrichment. This study examined how participants (program administrators and

staff) describe program outcome differences among individual campuses as well as how participants (program administrators and staff) describe program implementation (curriculum, program facilitation, program fidelity, and physical location) at individual campuses.

Research Questions

1. How do study participants (program administrators and staff) describe program outcomes across campuses?
2. How do study participants (program administrators and staff) describe program implementation differences (curriculum, program facilitation, program fidelity, and physical location) across campuses?

Research Design

According to Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey (2004), “carefully developed logic models have the potential to improve service provision or program management because the model, or plan, incorporates a theoretical understanding of how different actions or steps interact to produce certain outcomes. If outcomes are less than acceptable, staff and managers can use the logic model, to diagnose problem points, and suggest improvement strategies” (p. 370). In this study, the logic model (Figure 1) sought to explain why differences in attendance and PYD data differed among UFL sites, given the same inputs, outputs, and expected results.

To provide an in-depth perception of what occurs during a UFL course, this current study used a comparative case study design employing semi-structured interviews in conjunction with the data from the TEA TAPR report and the 2017-2018 UFL Annual report which summarizes the survey findings for 5th-grade UFL participants during the academic year 2017-2018.

Additional data sources, such as program documents and reports, were also analyzed. The UFL Program Research Report was used throughout the study to show results of the program in the

domains of Positive Youth Development and to show differences in data between the different elementary sites in this study. Fifth graders completed the Positive Youth Development Scale (PYD) before and after their 5th-grade program. Results from pre-and post-surveys and between research and non-research participants were compared. Some students completed only one survey either at the beginning or at the end of the program. Data from this research was analyzed to determine differences in data among sites and make recommendations to improve fidelity across the program.

Site and Participant Selection

All of the elementary schools in this study are in the South Plains region of West Texas and self-selected to incorporate the Texas Tech University UFL program on their campus as an after-school enrichment program for their students. The three elementary schools (out of the six total in the UFL program) that had ten or more student participants ($n > 10$) were included in this study. The director of the UFL program, Raquel (pseudonym), recommended the facilitators and principals to be interviewed for this study. Participants were not recruited by Texas Tech University nor by me.

Data Collection

Data collection took place in the fall of 2019 following IRB approval from the university. As previously mentioned (Chapter One), eight participants were interviewed for this study including the UFL director, assistant director, and program coordinator, as well as the two undergraduate research facilitators and the three principals of the elementary sites included in this research study. Each participant was interviewed separately. Participants who worked for the UFL were interviewed at the UFL office at Texas Tech University, and the principals were interviewed at their respective elementary campus. This qualitative study used semi-structured

interviews and all eight participants were interviewed using an interview protocol (see Appendix B). In describing the role of semi-structured interviews in qualitative research, Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey (2004) state, “One method of data collection that has become very common in program evaluations is semi-structured interviews with administrators, staff, and program customers, conducted to document various aspects of a program or agency” (p. 363). Formal semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to prepare questions in advance as well as the latitude to ask probing questions as the interview unfolds (Bhattacharya, 2017). According to Marshall & Rossman (1999), “The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses” (p. 108). The questions selected for the interview were general, open-ended, and selected to gain insight into each UFL site in order to develop case studies for each campus that accurately describe the successes, challenges, curriculum implementation and fidelity, training, and uncovers differences in data (see Appendix B). According to Creswell (2013), “interview plays a central role in the data collection process” (p. 162). Using this approach enables the researcher to ask prepared questions while having the flexibility to address unexpected directions throughout the interview. In addition, questioning makes it easier for the researcher to compare responses for each question asked among all participants in the study (Bhattacharya, 2017).

During each interview, I took handwritten notes on a copy of the interview protocol (see Appendix B) while asking the open-ended interview questions from the prepared protocol. I also noted when our conversation strayed from the original protocol. Each of the one-on-one interviews were recorded using an electronic voice recorder. Later, each audio recording was transcribed using an online service, and my handwritten notes were scanned upon completion. The interview notes, recordings, and transcripts were used as the main data collected for this

study (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). Audio recording interviews allowed me to gain an accurate recollection of the interview. In addition, I have the opportunity to replay the audio recordings while analyzing data to ensure the accuracy of data and the transcript. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe the types of means of collecting data during the process of a qualitative inquiry:

A number of different methods of data collection are possible as the researcher and practitioner work together in a collaborative partnership. Data can be in the form of field notes of the shared experience, journal records, interview transcripts, and others' observations. (p. 5)

Additionally, this qualitative study developed a case study from each of the three elementary sites used by the UFL to collect data specific to the unique circumstances of each location. According to Creswell (2013), "case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case themes" (p. 97). Creswell further explains that when creating case studies, a single case can be determined or multiple cases discovered can be compared with one another. This qualitative study sought to isolate each of the three elementary sites used by the UFL to collect data from interviews performed with the director, assistant director, principals, and site facilitators along with publicly accessible data such as the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) to explain similarities and differences found in the 2017-2018 UFL Programming Research Report in regards to attendance, as well as pre-program and post-program data based on the PYD scale.

Role of the Researcher

As an alumnus of Texas Tech University, I am familiar with the program, organizational culture, and staff. I have developed a research partnership between the Texas Tech Center for Adolescent Resiliency via this research. Additionally, a close working relationship was developed between the UFL Director and me. Thus, this program and its elementary school sites were appropriate for this study.

Data Analysis

Each interview yielded up to 65 minutes of audio recording. Using the audio recordings and transcriptions, I performed an analysis of each site and each of the participants that were charged with implementing and facilitating the UFL program in the case study. Following the field interviews, I listened to the audio recordings and used them to revise and edit notes taken in the field. By doing so, I was able to identify code segments and describe the information to develop emerging themes. Interview transcripts were evaluated numerous times as the researcher “move[d] from reading to describing, classifying, and interpreting” (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). Next, themes were interpreted in order to find the “larger meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 187). I then acted on intuitions and insights gained through the interview process to help interpret data and draw conclusions through the Program Theory framework. Specifically, where did inconsistencies, irregularities, or systems break down that caused the inputs, outputs, and expected results to vary among the different sites in the UFL program?

Data obtained from the interviews, case studies, the TEA TAPR report, and the 2017-2018 UFL Programming Research Report enabled me to triangulate data results to ensure validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I identified code segments and described the information to develop these themes. Next, themes were interpreted to find the “larger meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 187). After reviewing the TEA TAPR report and the 2017-2018 UFL

Case Study Validity and Reliability

Case study research can be defined as a “scholarly inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident and in which multiple sources of evidence is used” (based on Yin, 1994, p. 33 as cited in Dooley, 2002, p. 335-36).

Additionally, case study research explores a particular phenomenon, “not by controlling variables but rather by observing all of the variables and their interacting relationships” (Dooley, 2002, p. 336). In-depth interview strategies are essential to record the profound significance of the occurrence in the participant’s unique voice (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The purpose of using case studies is to analyze and make a thorough explanation of each case (elementary sites) and its setting (Creswell, 2013). Studies that focus on the culture of the group, program, or organization typically use case studies to allow the researcher to be immersed in the setting of the participant. Yin (2013) attests that the researcher conducting a case study must possess four fundamental qualities: the ability to ask the right questions and expound on responses, affability, flexibility in order to react to various situations, deeply knowledgeable of issues being studied, and finally a commitment to remaining impartial by any preconceived notions. This inquiry-based (individual, group, interaction) qualitative research is essential to the overall approach to collecting data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This study relies more on analysis of data collected from interviews and the 2017-2018 UFL Programming Research Report rather than direct observation.

Chapter 4

Results and Findings

Social and emotional learning (SEL) in our education system is a topic that has continued to gain momentum and has been recognized as a vehicle to raise students' resiliency and their scholastic success (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Chapter Four is divided into five sections. The first two sections of this chapter are dedicated to the elementary sites in the case study, and I provide a profile of the subjects interviewed for this study.

Pseudonyms for each school and participant are used to protect privacy. In each of these sections, a description of the school, community, and the UFL program based on publicly sourced data, the 2017-2018 UFL Annual Report, and the data gained from participants' interviews will be provided. After the first two sections, the remaining sections will address the data for each elementary site found in the 2017-2018 UFL Annual Report, the four themes that emerged, and the Program Theory theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two aligned with the emerging themes.

Themes that emerged

After comparing data from the 2017-2018 UFL Annual Report, the TEA TAPR report, and transcripts from interviews, the following themes emerged:

1. Training of college-age student volunteers as well as researchers was inconsistent.
2. Implementation of the UFL at different sites did not follow the same structure in order to maintain integrity when younger student volunteers serve as facilitators.
3. Adequate resources (funding, human resources, and in-kind resources) are needed to continue to provide quality leadership, training, and a framework necessary to expand

the reach of the program as well as facilitating partnerships with school districts and organizations wishing to use UFL curriculum to replicate the program.

4. Campus or district administrative support for the UFL Program was not consistent.

Background of Elementary Sites

Background: Orange Elementary

Orange Elementary (pseudonym) is located in a rural community outside of Lubbock. As stated in the 2017-2018 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), the campus served 518 students in grades 2-5, making it the largest campus in the district. Seventy-eight percent of the students identified as Hispanic, 17% White, three percent African American, one percent Asian or Pacific Islander, and one percent of students identified as two or more races.

Additionally, 82% were considered economically disadvantaged, 19% non-educationally disadvantaged, 13% English learners, and 54% of the student population met the State of Texas threshold to be considered at-risk. In 2017-2018, Orange was rated “Improvement Required” (IR) by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The principal of Orange Elementary said that TEA accountability could be difficult, but the process of working through the IR improvement model made the school better. Specific challenges of the campus include high turnover of staff and administrators. (Orange has had a new principal every two years for the last six academic years). After the last year, the campus only had to replace two teachers after years of high turnover. Also, getting the primary campus to buy in and use data to drive instruction was a challenge, even though their campus was not tested. Finally, training teachers to understand the challenges of working with students in poverty, teaching students that their present circumstances do not determine their future, and to adopt a mantra of “Our Kids Can Do It!” were all goals the principal had for the staff or Orange Elementary. Also, as the economic situation in Rural ISD

ebbs and flows with the oil and gas market, teachers' expectations for their students' success cannot.

Throughout the interviews conducted with the UFL staff and volunteers for this study, Orange Elementary was a source of concern because they are an extremely underserved school population with an adverse school climate and culture. The combination of a small town and campus, low socio-economic status of the majority of students, and home issues made Orange Elementary a challenge. Both directors of the UFL stated that the school culture is not set up for students to thrive academically or socially but felt proud that they were able to "break through" with the student population. Raquel stated, "Our focus has been fresh, I think, to that community and to that group of kids in being more proactive and not setting criteria, saying, you have to meet these criteria to be a part of our group, but really just accepting and loving whoever is in our group and treating every individual as a leader, as somebody who has the potential. Because we do believe they have the potential just to grow." Danielle added:

The school culture is different, and so with that, I always like to say that that is where you get to see UFL work because what we teach the kids, it can be taught to anyone. It's about giving them those leadership tools, but there, that's where we actually probably see a lot more growth because when we get these kids, they have the desire to be leaders, but their foundation is not the same compared to others.

The school is located in Rural ISD (pseudonym), which showed tremendous success with the UFL but had not renewed its commitment to continue the program at the time of this study. Initially, the program was funded through a grant at no cost to the district, students, and parents. Additionally, the campus and district administrators who piloted the UFL program are no longer with the district, and the current administration has not been committed to the long-term success

of the program. Therefore, the UFL continued to offer services to current sixth-graders who started the program as fifth-graders but did not start a new group of fifth graders during the 2019-2020 school year.

Orange Elementary implemented the UFL program in 2016 after the Region 17 Education Service Center recruited the UFL to help students in Rural ISD transition from junior high to high school in 2008. The success of the initial program led the district to add the UFL program for fifth and sixth-grade students. The principal, [insert pseudonym], inherited the program from her predecessor and felt it added enormous value to her campus.

Background: Morris Elementary

Morris Elementary (pseudonym) was founded in 2013 after the district merged two smaller campuses together and is located in Southwest Lubbock. According to the 2017-2018 TAPR, the campus served 708 students in grades Pre-K-5. Thirty-nine percent of the students identified as Hispanic, 55% White, three percent African American, one percent Asian or Native American, and two percent of students identified as two or more races. Additionally, 32% were considered economically disadvantaged, 68% non-educationally disadvantaged, less than one percent English learners, and 24% of the student population met the State of Texas threshold to be considered at-risk. The principal of Morris Elementary, Principal Douglas (pseudonym), explained that they were a diverse campus that reflected the ethnic diversity of Lubbock and the extreme disparity in economic levels of the families his campus serves. He said that his school “looks just like going to the mall or the fair.” This diversity is reflected in students both above and below reading levels and a diverse range of social norms that can often affect discipline issues. In 2017-2018, Morris Elementary was rated “Met Standard” by the TEA and received distinction designations for their test scores in the areas of “Academic Achievement

in Science” and “Postsecondary Readiness.” In addition to the UFL program, the campus is also a Project Lead the Way Launch Program (STEM).

While interviewing Principal Douglas at Morris Elementary, he stressed the importance of creating a culture of accountability that started with the campus leadership and flowed down to the teachers and the students as well. Douglas stated:

We have outstanding assignments as far as how we do things operationally. We do things procedurally. Everyone has an assignment before school, during school, and after school, so I think overall just organization is one thing that we do. That we can see in black and white where we have written them down on paper. We are trying to be organized, and having people in the right place, really helps produce accountability every day.

Throughout the interviews conducted for this report, Morris Elementary was considered the “gold standard.” Both directors, Raquel and Danielle of the UFL, stated that the positive school culture was evident when entering the building. When commenting on school culture, Danielle said, “Great campus. You can tell there is strong parent engagement at that campus for UFL. Great school culture. Again, the kids have the desire to be there. Lots of good things there.” The UFL program at Morris was described as a fun group with high levels of comprehension. The students involved in the UFL program wanted to make lessons come alive by sitting with someone at lunch or creating a culture of anti-bullying.

Background: Henry Elementary

Henry Elementary (pseudonym) was founded in 1940 and is located in the center of Lubbock (near the Texas Tech University Campus). According to the 2017-2018 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), the campus served 516 students in grades Pre-K-5. Twenty-two percent of the students identified as Hispanic, 61% White, two percent African

American, ten percent Asian, and five percent of students identified as two or more races. Additionally, 15% were considered economically disadvantaged, 85% non-educationally disadvantaged, four percent English learners, and 20% of the student population met the State of Texas threshold to be considered at-risk. According to the principal of Henry Elementary, Principal Reiss (pseudonym), even though ELL students made up a small percentage of the student population, in any given year there were 14 to 17 languages spoken on her campus. When explaining the challenges of a diverse student population, Principal Reiss said, “We have between 14 and 17 different languages represented on our campus from all walks of life with one target that everybody has to meet at a certain grade level through state testing, which we are held accountable for, and there is so much more to a child than just that piece.” In 2017-2018, Henry Elementary was rated “Met Standard” by the Texas Education Agency and received distinction designations for their test scores in the areas of “Top 25 Percent: Comparative Academic Growth” and “Top 25 Percent: Comparative Closing the Gaps.” In addition to the UFL program, the campus is also a Fine Arts/Humanities Magnet Program (consisting of both neighborhood students as well as those who apply and are accepted from the region) which includes a Suzuki String program and the first elementary campus in the South Plains area to become an authorized International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program School. Recently, the school, its leadership, and staff have mentored their feeder junior high and another local elementary school to implement an IB program successfully.

Additionally, the principal of Henry Elementary touts the many opportunities and clubs for her students, including chess club, robotics, academic UIL, science fair, a nationally recognized Kodaly Choir, and as part of the fine arts magnet, the campus presents student-directed cross-curricular programs monthly. One of the challenges of Henry Elementary School

is physical space. Because the school is landlocked, they only have two Pre-K classrooms and four classrooms and teachers for grades K-5. This issue forces a waiting list of eager students and parents and the campus administration to “draw a line” when it comes to accepting area students on a magnet basis due to limited classroom space. However, the combination of the neighborhood school and special programs helps to create a more culturally and economically diverse student population.

Throughout interviews conducted for this report, Henry Elementary was considered the elementary school that “set the bar.” Both directors of the UFL, Raquel, and Danielle, stated that the high intellectual level of the students challenged the UFL leadership and facilitators to “be at the top of their game.” Raquel said, “The pluses for the Henry kids is creativity. They challenge us, as facilitators, to be on top of our game, which is great. Throughout the years, I cannot even say one group is like this.” When describing the distinctive school culture, Danielle said, “We have great support from the principal. She is one of our biggest UFL champions. Great parent engagement. The kids have a great foundation. They are pretty high caliber.” The UFL program at Henry was described as “exceptional” with a high culture in academics and fine arts that spurred productive conversations within the UFL curriculum. This specific campus was also commended for its support from parents and teachers.

Henry Elementary implemented the UFL program in 2008 (the second year of the UFL) because the principal was part of one of the original UFL pilots at her previous campus, where she served as the assistant principal. When she was named the principal at Henry Elementary, she sought out the UFL, because in her words she “wanted her students to develop leadership skills as part of the development of the whole child.” Also, she felt the UFL program had a positive effect on her campus, stating:

I think the growth for them in learning about how to work and play well with others, and also the leadership skills that are taught throughout that year develop comradery. The opportunities for them to do things outside the classroom develop strength in their day-to-day journey, their decision-making, their thinking, their cooperative groups, and in learning about community and the importance of our part in that.

Subjects Interviewed

The eight participants in this study were the director of the UFL, the assistant director of the UFL, the UFL program coordinator, the two undergraduate research facilitators and the three principals of the elementary sites in this research study. All eight participants were interviewed using the interview protocol (see Appendix B) in November of 2019. In the following sections I will share some of information I learned through the interviews to better understand the UFL program, as well as its training, curriculum, and implementation in the various sites in this study.

UFL Director: Raquel (pseudonym)

I met with Raquel as my first participant interview in her office at Texas Tech. She is a larger than life personality who loves to talk and is extremely passionate about the work the UFL program is doing. She has been a part of CAR and UFL since 2008 (the second year) and has seen the program grow from its infancy to what it has become today. Raquel is a 50-year-old female who holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education, a master's degree in counseling, as well as Texas administrator certification. She came to UFL in June 2007. Previously, she was an elementary teacher for seven years and a counselor for nine years.

When asked about the most significant accomplishments and successes of the UFL, she was proudest of the sustainability of the program. Raquel claimed that the founders of the

program hoped that it would run for five years. However, they are currently in their twelfth year of serving students. In considering the longevity of the program, Raquel stated, “I think that sustainability has been a surprise to some that maybe were part of the initial process.” She is also proud of the work they have done in the area of curriculum development. Additionally, Raquel stated, “Other highs probably would be the curriculum that we have developed and then also the expansion. The intent was for it just to be a fifth and sixth-grade program. It has now expanded, with us serving fifth through 12th-grade students.” Raquel continued:

By utilizing Texas Tech college students, we are mentoring college students. From our work in the community and schools, we have had requests to work with teaching staff. So, our preliminary fifth and sixth- grade program has now turned into a community-wide program.

Also, organizations such as Communities in Schools have offered to partner and buy the UFL curriculum.

When I asked what some of the biggest frustrations and limitations of the program are, Raquel immediately said “resources.” Raquel explained:

The financial resources restrain us from expanding even more because we cannot hire additional people to implement programming. Furthermore, there is a desire from our community. Different places that are interested, but we just cannot meet their demand. I think that is probably the biggest [frustration].

She explained that college-age students are a plus and minus. The positive is that the college facilitators are great kids who are excited and enthusiastic about being part of the UFL, but the very nature that they are college students means that she is training an entirely new workforce almost every two years due to graduation.

The next part of the interview focused on the successes and accomplishments of the campuses in this study. Raquel said that while facilitating at Orange Elementary, the staff and facilitators had a different focus than the other schools they serve, due to the “at-risk population.” Raquel stated, “I think the success there has been to offer a different focus instead of a responsive, reactive, at-risk, Band-Aid-type of focus.” She believes that everyone has potential, but this required a shift in the way they presented the UFL curriculum in order to reach the students there. Raquel further explained, “I think it is a paradigm shift, maybe in the presentation. That sometimes takes a little bit more time on our end to convince students that we do believe that they have what it takes to be leaders.” Texas Tech students are treated like rock stars at Orange Elementary. Raquel said that the successes at Morris Elementary was attributed to the longevity of the program in the community. Two Lubbock ISD schools merged to create Morris Elementary, but one of those campuses was one of the original pilots for the UFL program. She also reported that the administration and parents were incredibly supportive, stating:

I think the pros there have been admin support, parent involvement, and the student initiative to be a part (of the UFL). They are a little more self-motivated to be a part of our program. Historically, younger kids know what UFL is. So, they anticipate it and wish to be a part of it. That seems to be a pattern there. So that is always good. Again, they have always been very supportive of all pieces of our needs, and communication has been excellent.

Students were also very self-motivated at Morris Elementary. Raquel has said that the best part of facilitating at Henry Elementary was the creativity of the campus and the students. Raquel explained, “They challenge us, as facilitators, to be on top of our game, which is great. I cannot

even say I have taught another group is like this.” She also said that the campus had a large amount of diversity, that students participated at a higher level of thinking, and that often there is no forgiveness if adults make mistakes. In describing the students, Raquel stated:

The diversity in the group and, again, the creativity. The thinking. The metacognition there is just constantly thinking. I think sometimes our staff feels like there is no room for forgiveness or grace. If a facilitator forgot blindfolds, then it is like, ‘How dare you forget.’ This student expectation was attributed to a culture of accountability throughout the school.

Even though there have been significant improvements at each campus, there have also been challenges as well. Consistency of attendance was a significant issue at Orange Elementary. Because this is a small rural community, sports, stock show, and other school activities often affect Friday attendance. Additionally, Raquel says that the district has multiple half-day Fridays throughout the semester, and because it is a small rural town, weather can also play a part in attendance issues. Another challenge of Orange Elementary was the constant need to re-teach, additional guidance, and support. This was due to both absenteeism and the culture of low expectation by the staff and administration. One of the concerns about Morris Elementary was that they are losing their students from fifth grade to sixth grade. Lubbock ISD has a competitive junior high magnet program, and she believes they are losing magnet students due to a fear of time commitment and a culture of GPA chasing. Raquel shared that Henry Elementary had a similar issue to Morris Elementary in that they are losing sixth graders for the same reason. She also shared that she was disheartened that 11 and 12-year-old children already had a “fear” of academic success.

There are some factors that contribute to these frustrations listed above. Rural ISD (pseudonym) started the UFL program in 2008 when they were recruited by the regional service center to help the junior high-to-high school transition. After the success of the program, they requested to start the UFL in younger grades during the 2016-17 school year. One of the factors that has caused challenges at Orange Elementary is the constant change in administration due to the low academic performance of the school. Therefore, the principal has changed every two years. The administration that initially partnered with in the UFL program left, and this commitment to the program has not transferred to the new administration. Rural ISD was given a grant to provide the UFL program for ten years, but that grant ran out, and there has been no response from the district to continue the program. Therefore, during the 2019-20 school year, the UFL did not start a fifth-grade class at Orange but continued services for the sixth graders who started the program last year. The factors that are causing students to leave the program at Morris Elementary can be attributed to when they are accepted to the magnet program and the upper-middle-class culture of academic pressure. At Henry Elementary, Raquel shared that the fixation on magnet acceptance mixed with the fine arts culture of “let us be creative” are both factors that are causing poor retention from fifth grade to sixth grade.

The next section of the interview with Raquel focused on training. The UFL staff works to recruit new and retain returning staff throughout the summer and into August. At the end of August or the beginning of September, all new and returning volunteers have an extensive training/induction process where they are given procedures and policies regarding appropriate relationships with students, dress code, background checks, and time commitment. Following this induction training, volunteers are offered a biweekly, in-depth training of the curriculum that will be presented in the following two weeks. Training is delivered face-to-face in a small group

setting. Volunteers and facilitators act out scenarios, so they respond positively with non-verbal redirection when needed at the elementary campus. To ensure fidelity, three full-time staff are part of implementation and training. Facilitating curriculum is usually offered by four-five UFL staff at each site. Raquel stated:

When I think fidelity of the curriculum, it is fidelity in our approach and the concept and what do we want the kids to walk away with after the program. For me, that does not mean verbatim. The lessons that have been typed out, there is much thought in the processing and discussion question. Nevertheless, if we have a campus with 25 kids, and then another campus that has 14 kids, the desired outcome is the same. Our delivery may be different.

A new bi-weekly training format was adopted, so student volunteers were trained on two lessons per training session. In describing the student volunteers, Raquel reported:

They are things that we deal with as educators, but these are freshmen, sophomore, junior students in college that maybe do not have that background or even have a desire to go into education, but they love working with kids and leadership. It is just teaching them how to manage them.

Service-learning majors through the College of Human Development are now required to have six volunteer hours in the field, but they are not required to attend UFL volunteer training.

Revamping the training to a bi-weekly format provided a “cleaner training” with better attendance and consistency. The addition of service-learning students doubled their volunteers.

UFL Assistant Director: Danielle (pseudonym)

I met with Danielle as my second interview in her office at Texas Tech University. She is also proud of the work the UFL is doing and loves the challenge of improving and growing the

program. Danielle is a 32-year-old female who holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and came to UFL three and a half years ago. Before coming to the UFL, Danielle worked in the nonprofit arena for seven years, where she developed after-school enrichment programs, directed youth engagement for nonprofits, coordinated volunteer opportunities for youth in the community, and trained adults.

When asked about the most significant accomplishments and successes of the UFL, Danielle was proudest of the growth of the program. Danielle stated:

To be honest, in three and a half years, it has grown quite a bit. When I got here, it was just the after-school program, working with the fifth and sixth graders at the campuses in three school districts. At that time, they had just started the replication. So, replication is saying, "Here is our curriculum that we do with fifth and sixth grade. It is a miniature version if you will." And then other school districts can use it. So, they had just developed the very first one, still in the trial and error phase, trying to figure out, does this work? They were working with one to two schools, but not seeing much success as far as continuity.

Danielle continued by saying:

Since then, I mean, we have been able to not only expand our reach into five school districts now, which I think is pretty huge, in the after-school program for fifth and sixth grade. So, expanding that, developing those partnerships where not only do we expand, but with at least one of them, that school district is paying UFL for us to be there. And then with that, not only were we working with fifth and 6th grade, we get to work with 7th through 12th. So, that is huge. That is a tremendous accomplishment. We are not done, but we have a lot to do.

Danielle is also proud that school districts and community organizations are asking to replicate their curriculum. In thinking about program replication, Danielle stated:

With the replication program, we have kind of looked at that curriculum and think, ‘Okay, what can we do to make it better?’ We partnered with Communities in Schools of the South Plains here, and they have paid for us to work with some of their sites. So, we are working with 20 different sites that are rural, kind of around the Lubbock County area. Thus, we will be doing training with them later this month, getting them the materials, and then hopefully helping them be a success in their school districts as well.

When asked about some of the biggest frustrations and limitations of the program, Danielle also immediately identified funding as a limitation. She explained that:

I think it is always going to be our funding because we have the vision, there is a demand, we see a gap in our space, in the leadership space, in the youth development space. I mean, to be honest, Lubbock is a great community for working, engaging with youth compared to other areas. However, there is that gap in leadership. Yes, many people want to do leadership, but the process of developing young leaders, there is a little bit more finesse to that.

The next part of the interview focused on the successes and accomplishments of the campuses in this study. Danielle said that the most prominent accomplishments at Orange Elementary, where the intangible things that could never be measured on a test. The small town, low SES, home issues, and challenges with school culture proved that the UFL could work anywhere. She was taken aback when she asked the students, “What do you want to do when you grow up?” They had no answer for her. When describing this specific experience, Danielle said:

I spent 45 minutes working with all 20 of my kids to say, 'What do you want to do?' I did not care if it was being a football player, it was just, 'What do you want to do?' These kids had never been taught; you can have a vision and work towards it. I do not have that happen at my other campuses. All my kids can tell you something, even if it is an 'I want to be a YouTuber.' My kids...that was a very spirited group, and talk about being shy and almost scared to say what it is they want to do. It is like no one had asked them.

Danielle's ability to break through with students and give them hope was the best part of her experience at Orange Elementary. Danielle also said that they were teaching students healthy ways to disagree with one another. Danielle believes that Morris Elementary was a great campus with a positive school culture where are the parents, students, and facilitators all want to be there. Similar to Morris Elementary, Danielle commented that Henry was also a great campus with amazing school culture. She also said about the principal, "She is one of our biggest UFL champions. Great parent engagement. The kids have a great foundation. They are pretty high caliber."

Even though there have been significant improvements at each campus, there have also been challenges as well. According to Danielle, the biggest challenge at Orange Elementary was that it was expensive to offer the program at a remote community, and now the monetary support has stopped. Another challenge of Orange Elementary is that a high percentage of their students have split custody with their parents. There is inconsistency in attendance when they are with one parent one week and a different parent the following week. Also, because the majority of their students live on a farm, they are often unwilling to make two trips to pick up the UFL student and a separate trip for their siblings. In contrast, Danielle could not think of a challenge

at Miller Elementary. Henry Elementary had a shortage of UFL volunteers, but this year the number of volunteers has been better.

There continues to be some factors that contribute to these frustrations listed above. The changes in both district and campus leadership at Rural ISD and Orange Elementary have caused some of the challenges at Orange Elementary, but Danielle said that “If you want us there, we will make it work!”

When discussing training, Danielle said that this year they changed from weekly staff meetings to every two weeks. Training is delivered in person and focuses on hands-on lessons that promote positive behavior, redirection, real-life scenarios, and time to talk as a group. Returning facilitators lead discussions. Training involves continually adding and changing. Danielle said that we are always there to redirect and help if things go sideways. Also, the staff model lessons until the student volunteers learn the “campus personality.” She also said that “they [the facilitators] could be better about using the scripted lessons, but they want to meet the kids where they are.” When asked if changes or interventions were put in place following the 2017-18 UFL Annual Report, she said that “every year we have conversations and make changes.” She mentioned the positive results of those changes are the kids and how they are learning from each other, administration, and parents.

UFL Program Coordinator: Elizabeth (pseudonym)

Next, I had the opportunity to interview Elizabeth, who is the UFL Program Coordinator. We met in the UFL office at Texas Tech University. She is soft-spoken but very sincere and passionate about her work with the UFL.

Elizabeth is a 21-year-old female graduate student with a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education. She has been in her current role as the UFL program coordinator for the

last five months but has been with the UFL for three years both as a volunteer for one year and a student assistant for two years. She completed student teaching but has never been employed as a full-time teacher. Elizabeth comes from a family of educators. Elizabeth said that the biggest accomplishment of the UFL is:

They just help build the youth and adolescents that we work with, their confidence, their competence, really just all of the development areas that a PYD focuses on growing students. So, all five Cs, I think that we focus on all areas in an even, holistic way.

Conversely, Elizabeth also observed that the most significant limitation of the program is a shortage of staff, so they can only serve so many students, and they do not have the means to expand to new schools. In considering staffing needs, Elizabeth explained:

Our staff limits us, so we can only serve so many students. I am serving at one school right now, I have 25 students in our program, and that is hard with our limited staff. We only have one student assistant available right then and then a few volunteers, so staffing makes it hard. And then just all the different schools that would like to have us, we do not have the means to go out to every school.

When discussing the successes and accomplishments of the campuses in this study. The biggest accomplishment at Orange Elementary were the relationships built. Elizabeth explained, “This is not the same as other teaching experiences I have had.” The 5:1 ratio of students to the UFL facilitator allows the staff to build relationships and give the students more individual attention. Henry Elementary has students that are high academically, pushed hard, involved in multiple extracurricular, and are “pushed through the UFL.” Elizabeth did not personally work with the students or facilitators at Morris Elementary.

Elizabeth believes that the biggest challenge at Orange Elementary is that students miss because they have split custody with their parents. Students also miss because they have to walk a younger sibling home and cannot make it back in time. She also shared that the biggest challenge at Henry Elementary is that students are involved in so many extracurricular activities that they cannot choose which one to attend. Some of the factors that cause the frustration at Orange Elementary is the lack of parent involvement, focus on sports, and a perception that the UFL is a snack and fun time. Some students at Henry Elementary are also in safety patrol and miss the beginning of every UFL session.

When discussing the training process, Elizabeth explained that training changed from weekly to every two weeks for program delivery. Not everyone attends these trainings. Some volunteers have one-on-one training, and some have no training. Students in the service-learning program have no curriculum. Student volunteers that do not attend training cannot lead lessons. During each training, volunteers walk through each part of the lesson: nutrition, leadership theme, and physical activity. They also use scenarios to teach the why and how of the program. The UFL uses a set curriculum with discussion and evaluation points.

Undergraduate Student Assistant: Hallie (pseudonym)

I had the opportunity to interview Hallie, who is one of the UFL student assistants. We met in the UFL office at Texas Tech University. I found her to be sincere and passionate about her work with the UFL. She works with children through the UFL as well as other programs offered through the College of Human Sciences.

Hallie is a 23-year-old undergraduate student assistant majoring in human development and family studies. She hopes to attend medical school and become a pediatric doctor. This is her

second year with the UFL. The first year she was a volunteer, and this is her first year serving as a student assistant. This is also her first teaching experience.

Hallie told me that the biggest accomplishment of the UFL is the way they teach leadership in a caring, compassionate way. Hallie also shared that she loves being in the schools because the “kids also teach us things.” She said that her biggest frustration with the program is learning how to be patient with kids. They often stray off-topic, and it is hard to find ways to redirect them.

When discussing the successes and accomplishments of the campuses in this study, Hallie shared that the students at Morris Elementary are advanced academically for their age. Her favorite part of the year is when students present their “competence show off” where they bring in their unique talents and show off for their peers. The students at Henry Elementary started shy and then really came out of their shell. Another success of this campus is the way that the students think through problems.

Hallie expressed that the biggest challenge on the Morris Elementary campus seems to be a time constraint. The UFL is competing with the other activities going on in the students’ lives. Henry Elementary is the closest UFL site to Texas Tech. The proximity makes it convenient for student volunteers, and sometimes there are too many volunteers, causing an issue where college volunteers do not have quality face time with UFL student participants. One frustration shared by Hallie was that her training at the Texas Tech Child Development Resource Center has an entirely different way of talking to and dealing with children than the UFL training, because it focused on positive language (try not to say no) and she felt it built autonomy and mutual respect.

The final section of the interview with Hallie focused on training. Training occurs every other week, and there are two lessons in every one of our weekly meetings. When discussing the format of the training program, Hallie shared:

During training, we sit in a conference room, model the lesson, and explain the activity. In order to ensure fidelity, there are lots of questions and modeling. Staff will intervene and redirect if a facilitator is struggling in front of student participants.

Undergraduate Student Assistant: Skyler (pseudonym)

Skyler was ill the two days I did field research in Lubbock, but we were able to complete the interview via FaceTime the following day. Skyler is a 20-year-old female undergraduate student majoring in human development and family studies. This school year is her third year involved with the UFL. She was a volunteer for her first year and has been an undergraduate student assistant for the last two years. She does not have any other teaching experience.

She said that the biggest accomplishment of the UFL is that the community as a whole knows the UFL is making a difference in Lubbock. However, the most significant limitation of the UFL program is that they do not have the staff to expand. Skyler said that she would love to see the UFL expand to her hometown of Dallas.

When asked about the most significant accomplishments and successes, Skyler, who has only worked at Morris Elementary, said, "From day one, all of my students knew their goal that they wanted to get out of the program." Students that were shy and closed off became open and grew relationships. Skyler also said that she felt like the UFL program was transforming their personality. Skyler said the only challenge of the program is that she wishes she had more time with her students. She said this could be more days a week or longer sessions once a week. The limited number of staff members makes expanding the length of the sessions impossible. Also,

the majority of volunteers are college students who may not be willing to volunteer more time or more days a week.

When I asked Skyler about the UFL training, she said that volunteers train once every two weeks on the three activities: nutrition, physical activity, and the leadership theme. There is also one comprehensive training at the beginning of the semester during which the staff talks about the dress and appropriate activities with kids. There is not a separate training for the student assistants. She also explained how the UFL uses materials and modeling to teach the lessons. To ensure fidelity in the curriculum, lesson plans are written, but the facilitator can choose to use the scripted lesson or improvise as long as the facilitator hits the discussion points. If a student facilitator or volunteer starts to struggle, one of the staff members will ask questions of the facilitator or students to try to get the conversation back on track.

One of the things that's changed since Skyler started the program three years ago is that the volunteers can facilitate lessons, but there is always a director, assistant director, or coordinator there as a safety net. Previously, there was only a graduate or undergraduate student assistant with the volunteers. These changes made the lessons more effective when there was an expert there to model or to redirect when things did not go well. Students felt like this was a safety net for them; they became more comfortable with the mentor in the room, and this led to better instruction.

Orange Elementary: Principal Breann (pseudonym)

I interviewed Principal Breann in her office at her new campus in Rural ISD. We even had to start and stop the interview a few times so her students could receive their rewards for achieving their personal reading goals.

Principal Breann is a 42-year-old female who has a bachelor's and a master's degree in education. She had the UFL on her campus in Rural ISD from 2013 to 2019, and this year she moved to the primary school to be the principal and is no longer at Orange Elementary. In addition to serving as the administrator in charge of the program, her oldest daughter was also a participant. She has been in education for 20 years, the first 13 as an elementary teacher, and the last seven years as both an assistant principal and principal.

Orange Elementary is the largest campus in Rural ISD, serving students in grades two through five. According to Principal Breann, this is very difficult because she had to coordinate testing for three different grades without having the students in pre-K through first grade at her school. While discussing these challenges, Principal Breann stated:

I think we struggled with our accountability. In the big picture, it is not great, but when we would maybe have an improvement required, we were able to fix things, and come back and get out of IR, and even though a couple of times we did go back and forth with that, I feel like we had a staff that would, on those off years, maybe not be? so great that one year. The next year, staff that was willing to work and make up that ground. We did that last year, my last year over there. Thus, hopefully, that will continue with the new principal there, and they can get two years instead of one year in, one year out. That was kind of the pattern we had.

Principal Breann said that the biggest challenge on her campus is the change in leadership every two years due to low scores on state testing. While discussing this issue, she said, "In my six years in admin at Orange, I worked under two different principals, and then I was a principal for two years. So, the leadership change is a big challenge." This change in leadership at both campus and school district levels has led to a massive turnover in staff annually. However, her

last year at Orange Elementary, she only had to replace two or three teachers after having enormous turnover in the previous years.

Another challenge of her campus is trying to get buy-in from the primary campus to take ownership of the academic success of their students even though they are not testing (until third grade). The desire to lead this change is the reason that she decided to make a change and be the principal of the primary campus this school year. She has worked hard to teach teachers to understand the challenges that come with high poverty and that their circumstance is not an excuse for students not to learn.

One of the factors that had a considerable effect on her school is the economic changes in Rural ISD. This community is dependent on the oil and gas industry, and as it ebbs and flows from boom to bust, so does the economic and racial make-up of the school. However, teachers should not change their expectations of students as the economics change. While discussing this challenge, Principal Breann stated:

We have a low socioeconomic percentage in our whole community, and so when teachers think these kids should only think about their class, or they get in trouble for not having a pencil, it is hard to get some teachers--not all, and it is fewer and fewer but--to get them to understand nobody cares about a pencil. That is the least of their concerns because they have to go home and take care of little brothers, or fix dinner, or do whatever else.

Therefore, the part of understanding the low socioeconomic part of our community, especially when we have many teachers that drive in from Lubbock. Sometimes they do not get that.

The previous principal started the UFL program because she had a connection with the director. Principal Breann decided to continue the UFL program while she was the principal

because of the leadership aspects and help dispel the myth of “our kids cannot do it.” She hoped the program would teach kids to be kind and treat people well and develop a sense of responsibility. Principal Breann felt that throughout the time the UFL program was on her campus that her fifth graders had the ability to more, but she and the administrative team and teaching faculty were too worried about getting off the IR list. She also shared that as a parent she thought that the students involved in the UFL program would be the future leaders of the school, student council, officers and clubs, and loved the program because it included all kids of all colors and all of the activities represented in the school.

The most significant success of the UFL program on Principal’s Breann’s campus was the commitment of the kids: once they started, they finished. Students from the UFL program were the first ones picked if she needed to mentor a third grader or needed help with snacks. She also attests that it was making her students better citizens.

Principal Breann at Orange Elementary did not have any frustrations or limitations of the UFL program other than space for more students; however, she said each time she wanted to add a student, the UFL found a way to get that student in. Overall, she feels it is a great program, and she is also very happy as a parent with what her daughter has gotten out of the UFL program as well.

Morris Elementary: Principal Douglas (pseudonym)

I met Principal Douglas in his office at Morris Elementary. We had the opportunity to work together early in our careers when I was a young band director, and he was in his first year as an assistant principal. However, we had lost touch and not seen each other in at least fifteen years. Principal Douglas takes his job very seriously. He is highly organized, thrives on rules and

order, and has exceptionally high standards for himself, his leadership team, staff, and the students.

Principal Douglas is a 47-year-old male, has a bachelor's and master's degree in education, and has earned a superintendent certificate. This school year is his twenty-third year in education. He was a teacher and coach for eleven years and has been a high school and elementary assistant principal before becoming the principal at Morris Elementary. Morris Elementary was founded after two smaller schools merged in 2013, and Principal Douglas started the UFL program when the school opened. One of the schools that merged to create Morris was one of the first pilot schools for the UFL, and the principal decided to keep it because he “wanted to keep the best part of both schools.”

Principal Douglas and his staff seek to provide students a well-rounded education. One-third of the student body receives special education services, one-third of the campus is low income, and one-third of the campus meets the State of Texas threshold to be concerned “at-risk.” While talking about the make-up of his campus, Principal Douglas said:

We are a third economically disadvantaged, a third special ed, a third free and reduced lunch. Very diverse need. We are a real town, USA. We have got such a mixture of kids. Low-income, very, very well income, very detached, and very, very engaged. So, we got a full smorgasbord here, that is for sure.

Principal Douglas at Morris Elementary school is most proud of creating a culture of accountability, stating:

I think one thing we do a very, very good job of is being able to set an excellent strong culture of accountability. When I say that, we have a good behavior plan in place, we

have a very, very good tutoring program in place. Where everybody tutors after school, you have an assigned time.

Principal Douglas says that this starts with the visibility of both the leadership and teachers. He believes in having systems in place to ensure a strong discipline system, tutoring, and operational systems before, during, and after-school. Principal Douglas says that one of the challenges of his campus is that it is so diverse. Some of the students are way above grade level in reading, and some are way below. Some students struggle with discipline and some behave very well at school. Some of the internal and external factors that cause these frustrations are attributed to social media, bullying, and a question of values. Douglas stated, “Coming to school with a diversity of values is a good thing, but it can also create tough conversations with students and parents.”

Principal Douglas inherited the UFL program from the merger but chose to keep it because it was one of the best programs from both schools. He hoped that the UFL program would embrace the diversity of his school and help discover shared values. This appreciation of values has helped students make mature better choices. The biggest accomplishment of the UFL program at Morris Elementary is that kids do not want to quit. The facilitators are there consistently, and he feels they are developing a value system.

Henry Elementary: Principal Reiss (pseudonym)

I interviewed Principal Reiss in her office at Henry Elementary. She takes the success of her school, staff, and students, very personally. Due to her long and distinguished career, she was a wealth of knowledge about a variety of topics, including the UFL program, the changing demographics of West Texas, SEL, GT, the elementary IB program, and more.

Principal Reiss is a 60-year-old female who earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education, master's degree in counseling, and administrative and superintendent certificates. She is currently in her 39th year in education, which included the first 19 years as an elementary teacher, GT coordinator, and counselor. She has been an administrator for the last 20 years as the director of counseling, assistant principal, and principal.

Henry Elementary is a unique school in that it is a neighborhood school that also has a fine arts magnet and the first IB elementary campus in the Lubbock area. They currently have 47 teachers and six paraprofessionals that teach 570 students on their campus. Additionally, they have a very active parent organization. Principal Reiss says that the biggest point of pride on her campus is the people that work there stating, "In my mind, it is the people, and it is the product that we offer through the hearts and minds of these teachers, and through our work as a fine arts magnet, and the International Baccalaureate®, which guides us to teach the whole child." In addition to the magnet and IB program, she feels very strongly about creating social-emotional learning opportunities for her kids and connecting their learning to the real world. One of the biggest challenges of Henry Elementary School is that they have 14 to 17 languages spoken and students from all walks of life who must meet the state accountability standards. Henry Elementary School is landlocked, so they are only able to offer two pre-K classes and four classrooms of every other grade. There is a waiting list to get into Miller Elementary school's magnet programs, and it is hard for the administration to "draw the line" of which students can attend and which ones cannot.

One of the external factors that causes frustration at Henry Elementary School is that IB is conceptually based, and it is not aligned with the Texas STAAR test. State accountability is only looking at academics and not SEL. While explaining this challenge, Principal Reiss

explained, “We have between 14 and 17 different languages represented on our campus, from all walks of life, with one target that everybody has to meet at a certain grade level through state testing, which we are held accountable for, and there is so much more to a child than just that piece.” Another factor is that students are not coming equipped for school. Divorce, foster care, and other factors can have a massive effect on learning, especially at the elementary age.

Principal Reiss sought out the UFL program for Henry Elementary because she was the assistant principal at one of the pilot UFL elementary schools and insisted that she have it on her campus when she was named the principal. When explaining the reasons for bringing the UFL to Henry, she said, “I sought that program out. From the day they named me as a principal, I wanted it on my campus because I want every student that leaves these doors to have the opportunity to develop leadership skills, and that is what they do.” She wants every student to develop leadership skills as part of their elementary education experience. She hopes that the UFL will be another opportunity to support who her students are becoming. She also feels that leadership, as needed for the workforce and the ability to work together and solve problems, is essential. Some of the biggest successes of the UFL program at Henry Elementary is the ability to bring students together so they work and play well with others. The program also offers opportunities outside of the classroom to develop skills in leadership, ethics and civility through the 18 week UFL curriculum.

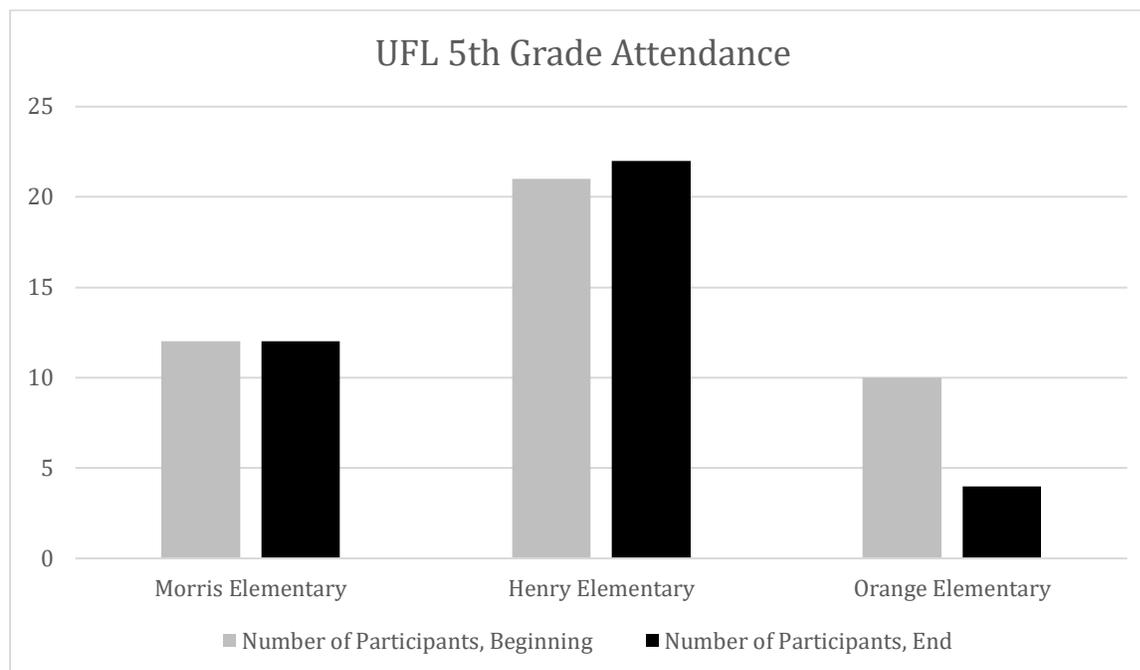
UFL 2017-2018 Annual Report

In 2017, the CAR and UFL contracted Zhanxia Yang for one year to perform a research study. The program felt that her expertise was essential for data collection needed to help disaggregate data that the UFL could not perform with their small staff. Research from this report has subsequently been used to inform programming regarding curriculum, assessment, and

adaptation. The 2017-2018 UFL Programming Research Report summarizes the survey findings for fifth and sixth-grade UFL participants during the academic year 2017-2018 (Yang, 2018). I refer to this report throughout the study to show the results of the program in the areas of Positive Youth Development and Developmental Assets Profile Scale and show differences in data between the different elementary sites in this study. Fifth graders completed the Positive Youth Development Scale (PYD) before and after their fifth-grade program, and 6th graders completed the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP). Results in the UFL Annual Report from pre-and post-surveys and between research and non-research participants were compared.

When comparing data from the UFL programming research report and the semi-structured interviews, the following data was analyzed, and questions arose. The fifth-grade program began with 55 students, but only 40 students completed the program for a loss of 27% from mainly three elementary schools (Yang, 2018). According to the UFL Programming Research Report (Yang, 2018), the largest groups of students who left the program were from three elementary schools (see Figure 2). The three elementary sites used in this study were included in this study using pseudonyms, and the remaining UFL program sites with less than ten participating students were not used in this study.

Figure 2. UFL Fifth Grade Attendance



Yang, Z. (2018). UFL Programming Research Report, p. 6.

The next significant section of the study by the Center for Adolescent Resiliency described the PYD scale results for the campus comparisons of the fifth-grade participants. According to Yang (2018), “PYD is an approach to adolescent development that is strength-based and views youth as resources to be developed. PYD emerges when the plasticity of human development is aligned with developmental assets. While traditional youth developmental research focused on the negatives that youth should avoid, PYD is a new perspective that emphasizes positive development” (p. 27). Specifically, Lerner and colleagues conceptualized five positive perspectives, which they labeled as “Five Cs,” including competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. Table 2 presents the five Cs and their subscales and the possible range of scores for each C and its subscales. During the 2017-2018 academic year, all 5th grade participants in the UFL program completed a survey that includes a PYD short-form

survey, demographic variables, and SDT survey at the beginning of the program and the end of the program. Table 3 and Table 4 show the results from the three schools in this study.

Table 2. Positive Youth Development 5C's

5'Cs (range of scores)	Subscales (range of scores)
Competence (1-4)	Academic (1-4)
	Social (1-4)
	Physical (1-4)
	Self-Worth (1-4)
Confidence (1-4.33)	Positive Identity (1-5)
	Appearance (1-4)
	Social Conscience (1-5)
Character (1-5)	Values Diversity (1-5)
	Conduct Behavior (1-4)
	Personal Value (1-5)
	NA.
Caring (1-5)	Measured by six questions directly. (1-5)
	Family (1-5)
Connection (1-5)	Neighborhood (1-5)
	School (1-5)
	Peer (1-5)

Yang, Z. (2018). UFL Programming Research Report, p. 27.

Table 3 shows the PYD comparisons across campuses at the beginning of the 5th grade among research participants from the three elementary sites in this study.

Table 3. Campus Comparisons of PYD from Beginning of 5th Grade Research

Variable	Total N = 55	Henry n = 21	Morris n = 12	Orange n = 10
Competence (1-4)	2.95	2.74	3.31	2.97
Academic	3.32	3.25	3.25	3.25
Social	2.90	2.75	3.50	2.60
Physical	2.62	2.23	3.17	3.05
Confidence (1-4.33)	3.44	3.36	3.64	3.42
Self-Worth (1-4)	3.02	2.68	3.50	3.30
Positive Identity (1-5)	4.34	4.33	4.17	4.44

Appearance (1-4)	2.92	2.87	3.25	2.70
Character (1-4.75)	3.88	4.01	3.84	3.69
Social Conscience (1-5)	4.39	4.45	4.54	4.35
Values Diversity (1-5)	3.60	3.85	3.38	3.05
Conduct Behavior (1-4)	3.10	3.33	3.08	3.00
Personal Value (1-5)	4.40	4.38	4.38	4.35
Caring (1-5)	4.42	4.46	4.46	4.35
Connection (1-5)	4.03	4.10	4.13	3.75
Family (1-5)	4.22	4.19	4.25	4.20
Neighborhood (1-5)	3.54	3.50	3.54	3.45
School (1-5)	4.05	4.17	4.04	3.60
Peer (1-5)	4.30	4.48	4.67	3.75

Yang, Z. (2018). UFL Programming Research Report, p. 31.

Table 4 shows the PYD comparisons across campus at the end of the 5th grade among research participants from the three elementary sites in this study.

Table 4. Campus Comparisons of PYD from End of 5th Grade Research Participant

Variable	Total N = 40	Henry n = 16	Morris n = 9	Orange n = 4
Competence (1-4)	2.97	2.88	3.39	2.38
Academic	3.34	3.34	3.67	2.50
Social	2.90	2.81	3.22	2.50
Physical	2.68	2.47	3.28	2.13
Confidence (1-4.33)	3.35	3.13	3.74	3.42
Self-Worth (1-4)	3.09	2.75	3.78	3.25

Positive Identity (1-5)	4.09	3.84	4.39	4.50
Appearance (1-4)	2.86	2.78	3.06	2.50
Character (1-5)	3.88	3.86	3.96	3.78
Social Conscience (1-5)	4.15	4.19	4.22	4.00
Values Diversity (1-5)	3.79	3.87	3.78	3.50
Conduct Behavior (1-4)	3.36	3.41	3.22	3.63
Personal Value (1-5)	4.19	3.97	4.61	4.00
Caring (1-5)	4.28	4.12	4.35	4.21
Connection (1-5)	3.79	3.55	4.14	4.00
Family	NA	NA	NA	NA
Neighborhood	3.14	2.94	3.61	3.38
School	4.05	3.81	4.11	4.38
Peer	4.24	3.91	4.72	4.50

Yang, Z. (2018). UFL Programming Research Report, p. 32.

UFL 2017-2018 Annual Report: Orange Elementary

As shown in Figure 2, the most substantial decrease in attendance over the 2018-2019 school year Orange Elementary (-25%). The UFL director, Raquel (pseudonym), attributed the change in attendance to small-town conflicts with their Friday UFL class, including sporting events, stock show, and early dismissal at the end of grading periods.

Additionally, Orange Elementary had the minimum scores from the PYD 5-Cs variables and their subscales. The other campuses are fairly even with the number of times they ranked the lowest among the 5-C PYD variables. However, two Orange Elementary scores improved and became the highest among the campuses. These areas included Conduct Behavior (in Character)

and School variable (in Connection). In my interview, the UFL director, Raquel, said that the progress at Orange Elementary was “so huge.” There was enormous growth, and by October/November, attendance had also improved. The principal of Orange Elementary, Principal Breann, echoed this sentiment and said that having the UFL program in their community and on their campus dispelled the myth that “our kids cannot be leaders.” The program and the facilitators involved with this campus had to redirect their approach and work on building positive relationships. Instead of creating Band-Aids for students that were labeled “at risk”; they wanted to create a proactive and not reactive approach to building students up. This approach necessitated a change in mindset that all students had potential and a shift in the UFL facilitator’s presentation style to include re-teaching, guidance, and support. She also shared that the trust factor was very low at the beginning of the program implementation between the students and the UFL staff. However, they all felt an enormous sense of accomplishment when they won the kids over.

Principal Breann of Orange attributed the sense of accomplishment to the staff and volunteers and their commitment to the students. Breann believes the student participants thought that the college volunteers were “rock stars” and cherished the relationships built. However, the change in student behavior and trust necessitated a considerable paradigm shift among the students between the culture and climate that they experienced during the week and having to shift to an environment that involved working through problems and excepting differences in their UFL experience on Friday. Assistant director Danielle also agreed that many of the positive attributes of the UFL program were the intangibles, but it showed that the curriculum worked. Many of the students did not come with a foundation for leadership or conflict resolution but soared after having the UFL experience and curriculum. The coordinator

of the UFL, Elizabeth, also agreed that the students came to the after-school program with a lack of academic foundation knowledge. Orange Elementary teachers were in “survival mode” and not able to teach character education. This school culture led to frustration, yelling, and telling students what they were and where they were not going to do. However, it failed to build a connection between students and teachers. The UFL student to teacher ratio of 5:1 was ideal for giving each student participant the individual attention they needed. Assistant director, Danielle, asserts that Orange Elementary is “where the UFL works” because they are teaching students healthy ways to disagree and the principal thought the program taught her students to be kind, treat people well, and was creating better citizens.

UFL 2017-2018 Annual Report: Morris Elementary

As shown in Figure 2, they held their attendance steady at 22% over the 2018-2019 school year. This was attributed to the high socio-economic status of the parents who prioritized the program and made sure students were there by UFL director, Raquel. Assistant director, Danielle added that students only missed for serious illness. Also, the UFL program met at Miller on Wednesdays, so they were not competing with vacations or school holidays. Student assistant for Morris Elementary, Hallie, agreed that consistent attendance could be attributed to parents who were highly organized and managed their child’s time. However, the principal of Morris Elementary credits the UFL staff for creating an environment of “want to” and “genuineness.” Students want to be there because the UFL facilitators were there consistently, and the principal credits the program for “planting seeds” in his students who participated.

Additionally, Morris was the campus that consistently scored the highest on the 5 C’s (Table 3) and had the majority of the maximum scores among the variables and their subscales that were examined. As represented in Table 4, Morris had the maximum scores across campuses

at the end of the fifth-grade program from research participants as well. Through my interviews, the UFL director, Raquel, attributes the success of the UFL program at Morris Elementary to the longevity of the program back to its original pilot in 2007 that eventually merged to become part of this campus. She also attests that strong administrative and parental support mixed with high-achieving and self-motivated students are the reason for the high PYD scores both before and after the program. The assistant director, Danielle, also credits a family culture of encouraging kids to participate in extracurricular activities with the success of the UFL at Morris Elementary. Many students also participate in sports, church, and other community-based programs in addition to the UFL. Student assistant, Hallie, also credits a high socio-economic culture of high expectations for quality schools and teachers for the high PYD scores at this campus. Additionally, she also commented that students were advanced for their academic age.

One of Hallie's favorite lessons of the year was the competence show off when students perform or demonstrate competence in a certain activity or skill for their peers. The other student assistant, Skyler, was also taken back that from day one, the overwhelming majority of students knew their personal goal for participating in the UFL program. The students that were closed off opened up throughout the program by growing their relationship with the UFL staff. She claims that this experience transformed some of the student's personality. Principal Douglas of Morris Elementary shared his love of diversity within his school. This diversity includes students of all ethnic backgrounds as well as socio-economic levels and credits the UFL for helping to create "diversity in the discovery of values," and this appreciation of different values leads to students making better choices. He explains the high level of his students on the PYD scale in that kids have potential that needs to be tapped through positive coaching, and that is what the UFL has done for his campus.

UFL 2017-2018 Annual Report: Henry Elementary

Henry Elementary is a unique campus in that they scored the highest on the 5 C's variables and their subscales (Table 3) in the areas of Character and, but also had the majority of the minimum scores in the areas of Competence and Connection (especially family connection). As represented in Table 4, Henry (in addition to Orange) represented many of the minimum scores across campuses at the end of the fifth-grade program from research participants. Through my research, this was attributed to the unique make-up of students at Henry Elementary. The fine arts magnet program, IB program, and proximity to a research university produce a diverse student body with a high number of students designated gifted and talented. Danielle, assistant director of the UFL, said that the highly supportive principal and parents are credited with the success of the program at Henry Elementary.

The high intellectual and creative caliber of the students create great conversations through the UFL curriculum. Elizabeth, the UFL coordinator, added that the students at this campus were very high academically, they are pushed and challenged both in school and at home, heavily involved in extracurricular activities, and are stretched intellectually and socially through the UFL program. Hallie, the student facilitator, said that her favorite part of Henry Elementary School was that the students started shy and then came out of their shell. This transformation was realized in the way students internalized challenges and thought through problems presented during the UFL curriculum.

This campus had some unique challenges as well as successes, and these showed? in their data as well. Principal Reiss of Henry Elementary said? that there was a communication breakdown, and she felt that the campus was getting the information about UFL out late to parents, and therefore students would "trickle in" throughout the first few months of school. UFL

staff that I interviewed commented that students were signed up for so many extracurricular activities that they had trouble choosing and prioritizing. Multiple facilitators also commented that due to the proximity to Texas Tech, they have the most volunteers at Henry Elementary, so student participants were sometimes outnumbered by volunteers. Thus, kids were distracted and did not have the same face time as other campuses. Both the director and assistant director commented that part of the GT mindset made it hard to get students to try new things. Students were always questioning what was being said and not open to listening to the lesson. Raquel even commented that students often wanted to hear their own voice instead of listening to the UFL lesson being presented, and she could imagine this group of students second-guessing themselves as they were taking a pre-and post-test. Low parental connection could also be attributed to serving a high economic clientele with two parents working a lot and not having time at home together. Multiple facilitators commented that this was the only campus that had secretaries and nannies picking up students from the UFL program.

Emerging Themes

After comparing data from the 2017-2018 UFL Annual Report, the TEA TAPR report, and transcripts from interviews, the following themes emerged.

Training

The training of college-age student volunteers, as well as researchers, was inconsistent. After I conducted interviews in the field, training seems to be the biggest concern to provide consistent delivery of curriculum with fidelity. The model used by the UFL staff to train college-aged students has the potential to be effective. Currently, training occurs in a group setting, where student volunteers experience different scenarios through modeling before going out to teach students on an elementary campus. However, not all students or student assistants are

receiving the same training or training at all. Students that are service-learning majors through the College of Human Development-Child Development Research Center (CDRC) are required to have hours in the field, but they are not required to attend UFL volunteer training after they complete the initial rules and policy meeting. Therefore, these student volunteers do not attend any of the curriculum scenario-based training. UFL coordinator, Elizabeth, commented:

We have CDRC students that are coming, and they are not getting any training on curriculum, and our student assistants, if they happen to be here during training, they can help lead it. Typically, those are veteran volunteers, and so they have done it before, but they do not get to continue with that training.

When addressing training for the student assistants, Skyler said, “For me and the other student assistants, our training, because we have done this, all of us for at least a year or two, we do not get the same proper training for each week, but we always go over the lesson. If we have any questions, we ask one of our directors. If half of the student volunteers are from the service-learning programs and not required to attend trainings and the other half of the volunteers do not attend training regularly, there will consistently be a high percentage of volunteers not prepared to facilitate lessons.

Implementation of the UFL Curriculum

The implementation of the UFL program at different sites did not follow the same structure in order to maintain integrity, primarily when younger student volunteers were serving as facilitators. While I conducted field interviews, there was a mixed response when it came to allowing college student facilitators to go off-script and improvise, even if they were addressing all of the discussion points and evaluation questions for a specific lesson. Danielle, UFL assistant

director, explained the need to facilitate while understanding the “campus personality” of each campus stating:

Each one has their personality. And to be honest, I do think it could be better. I mean, I do not even know if there is fidelity between when I teach it and when Raquel teaches it, and we have been doing this for a while, because, in my opinion, it matters on the campus. Same goal, but sometimes you have to meet the kids where they are.

The recent change to ensure that either the director, assistant director, or program coordinator were present at all of the UFL sites while curriculum was being taught has been a positive change that has increased the college students’ confidence as many of them are teaching children for the first time. Skyler addressed this change in her interview while stating:

I definitely think it has made it better because the volunteers, if this is their first year and they don't really know what the UFL program is quite all about and they don't understand what each lesson is supposed to deliver, what the kids are supposed to get out of it, I think it's a lot more effective when someone who knows the lesson pretty well delivers it and is comfortable with it because then the kids can understand it a lot clearer and you can also point them more in the direction to get out of it, whatever the happiness or whatever that topic is. And then for having a full-time staff member at each school, for me it is a safety net of, well if I do not know this lesson very well, and I know I can ask one of them, which I think helps us deliver higher quality teaching to our students because they have more experience and so they can give us tips for how to better explain things, things like that.

The UFL staff are experienced educators with a large toolbox and tricks of the trade when student participants present challenges that college students may not be ready to deal with

positively and productively. Additionally, breaking the lessons into the same three sections each week--nutrition, physical activity, leadership lessons--allows for continuity as well as the opportunity to break facilitating up among the college facilitators to increase their confidence and competence in teaching the UFL curriculum with fidelity.

Adequate Resources

Adequate resources (funding, human resources, and in-kind resources) are needed to provide quality leadership, training, and a framework necessary to expand the reach of the program as well as facilitating partnerships with school districts and organizations wishing to use UFL curriculum to replicate the program. The most pressing issue facing the UFL program is a shortage of resources needed to provide high-quality instruction while meeting its mission and vision to provide social and emotional support to schools in the West Texas area. During the interview with Danielle, UFL assistant director, about the most significant limitation or frustration facing the UFL she immediately said:

I think it is always going to be our funding because we have the vision, there is a demand, we see a gap in our space, in the leadership space, in the youth development space. I mean, to be honest, Lubbock is a great community for working, engaging with youth compared to other areas. However, there is that gap in the leadership. Yes, many people want to do leadership, but developing young leaders, there is a little bit more finesse to that. And so, with that, we have that vision, but that lack of funding affects many things because it limits what we can do as far as staff, in-kind resources, and then, of course, getting those materials.

There is a desire and demand on the parts of the staff and community to grow the UFL program, but it is apparent that they do not have the resources, capital resources, and human

resources to grow the program beyond what it is currently in the fall of 2019. UFL director, Raquel, echoed some of the same sentiments as Danielle stating:

The limitations, I think, for most organizations are the same for us. That is going to be financial resources and human resources. The financial resources restrain us from expanding even more because we can't hire additional people to implement programming. And there is definitely a desire from our community. Different places are interested, but we just cannot meet their demand.

In order for the program to grow with fidelity, additional full-time staff and leadership must be added to ensure students are receiving the same high levels of instruction and curriculum. This increase in human capital will also be necessary to support and evaluate both organizations and districts that have a desire to buy the UFL curriculum and implement it with their staff. The ability to grow the scope and breadth of the UFL program will necessitate the acquisition of additional grants, research grants, business partnerships, and university support.

Campus Support

Campus or district administrative support for the UFL Program was not consistent. Though out my field research and interviews, one of the themes that seemed to continue to emerge was the campus (and sometimes district) administrator's attitude, commitment, and desire to have the UFL program on their campus. The most obvious example of this was the difference in Henry and Morris Elementary Schools whose principals sought out the UFL program because of past positive experiences versus Orange Elementary whose high administrative turnover left the UFL program without a campus or district administrator to champion, advocate, or value the benefits the program could add to their school culture and climate. When Danielle described the culture and leadership at Morris, she said, "I mean, if as

long as we have good principal support, that is always a plus for us, and we do. The principal there well, you will get to talk with him, Mr. Douglas, he is awesome.” Raquel discussed the effects of administrative turnover at Orange Elementary by saying:

There were many administrative changes over the last four years. With the admin changes come, again, not knowing what your school district is doing, not doing. Your focus is on, where's my role, and what am I doing? It is just frustrating that the admin that were invested in the program and understood what we are doing and hoped to do with their students has not transferred over into the new administration.

Additionally, the principals at Henry and Morris Elementary Schools found ways to incorporate and even extend the UFL beyond an after-school program and incorporate the SEL and leadership lessons as an important part of their campus.

Connecting to the Theoretical Framework

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Program Theory is based on the hypothesis that a program's design, activities, and execution will lead to the attainment of the outcomes you intend for your program, school, students, and teachers (“An Introduction to Program Theory,” 2019). Program Theory evaluation (PTE) is comprised of an explicit model that explains in what ways the program triggers the intended outcomes and how assessment is relatively steered by this model. The purpose of using a PTE is to test what part of the program is causing the outcomes.

Specific to this study *inputs* including staff (both full-time, student assistants, volunteers, and their sister team including a nurse and assistant director), financial (grants, matching grants for research, program delivery, and salaries), and program materials and supplies (t-shirts, snacks, materials, mail, travel, copier) were all deemed necessary to produce a particular outcome aligned to the programs' mission and vision. Even though staffing was the same for all

three campus sites, the number of student assistants changed based on geography and the day of the week. Rural ISD and the Orange Elementary campus was a considerable drive from the Texas Tech campus and happened to be on a Friday afternoon. However, Henry Elementary was almost walking distance to the Texas Tech campus and, at times, had almost too many volunteers to the point it was a distraction to the elementary students being served. Financial considerations also came into consideration specifically with arrangement with Rural ISD and the Orange Elementary site because the program was initially grant-funded. When the grant expired, the district did not attempt to renew or renegotiate to keep the program. Program supplies and materials were provided through the UFL office, so this was not a variable that changed from campus to campus.

Given the inputs above, the following *outputs* were produced, including the program structure, which was an 18-week fifth-grade leadership program where the students and or parents self-selected into the UFL program from participating host schools. Staff training was developed biweekly and involved hands-on facilitator training. As discussed above, there is a significant discrepancy in the training expectations for college students who volunteer through the UFL and that of the students who are fulfilling requirements through the Child Development Research Center (CDRC). The program curriculum was developed and included a nutrition lesson, physical activity, and leadership or character lesson during each student session. Fidelity of implementation can be questioned based on the experience level of the facilitator, level of training, and the autonomy to improvise as long as the intent of the lesson objectives are covered.

The *expected outcomes* from the program were evaluated through the positive youth development survey given to all fifth graders before and after their experience in the UFL

program. Variations in scores on this survey among Henry, Morris, and Orange Elementary Schools can be attributed to deviations in inputs and outputs listed above. The program also expected short term outcomes that included a shift and awareness of themes. This heightened awareness means that students practice reflecting on what they would do differently if they could replay a scenario that happened in their personal or scholastic life, students realize their actions affect others around them, and students can evaluate ethical dilemmas and practice abstract versus concrete solutions. The program also hoped to have medium and long-term outcomes that included helping the people around them thrive, development and understanding of autonomy, and fostering a sense of resiliency or the ability to bounce back through adversity. All of the UFL staff, volunteers, and administrators included in the field research for this study overwhelmingly agreed that the curriculum, facilitators, lessons, and relationship with Texas Tech University are achieving these medium- and long-term goals that are difficult to quantify through a survey.

The purpose of the study was to examine the UFL program and seek to explain why given the same inputs, outputs, and expected outcomes participating schools in the UFL program had varying levels of success based on attendance or retention and data obtained by the pre- and post- PYD survey administered by the program. Therefore, true to the PTE model, it is essential to use data and research to test what it is about the program that is causing the outcomes.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from this comparative case study. After comparing data from the 2017-2018 UFL Annual Report, the TEA TAPR report, and transcripts from interviews, data were coded, categorized, and the following themes emerged:

1. Training of college-age student volunteers, as well as researchers, was not consistent or required.

2. Implementation of the UFL at different sites did not follow the same structure in order to maintain integrity when younger student volunteers are serving as facilitators.
3. Adequate resources (funding, human resources, and in-kind resources) are needed to provide quality leadership, training, and a framework necessary to expand the reach of the program as well as facilitating partnerships with school districts and organizations wishing to use UFL curriculum to replicate the program.
4. Campus or district administrative support for the UFL Program was not consistent.

The results were presented in five sections. The first two sections were dedicated to participants' interviews and to each of the elementary sites in the case study. In these sections, a robust description of the school, community, and the UFL program based on publicly sourced data, the 2017-2018 UFL Annual Report, and the data gained from participants' interviews was provided. The following section was a profile of each of the eight participants in this study based on interviews gathered during field research. The following section addressed attendance and PYD data from pre- and post-surveys for each elementary site from the 2017-2018 UFL Annual report. The next section made comparisons of each of the three elementary sites and highlighted each of the four themes that emerged. The last section of Chapter Four tied in the Program Theory theoretical framework and logic model presented in Chapter Two. The results of this study provided much needed qualitative data to explain the factors and phenomena that are causing differences in data results among the various UFL sites. The inferences of these findings will be examined in the following final chapter.

Chapter 5 Interpretations and Recommendations

Introduction

As described in Chapter One, this thesis was designed to be an evaluation of the UFL program and how it has been implemented among different elementary school sites. By examining the data provided in the UFL Annual Report, publicly sourced data, and field interviews, I was able to focus on the reasons why three UFL sites were showing different results on the PYD scale as well as on attendance and retention rates of students. The research questions developed sought to understand how study participants (program administrators and staff) describe program characteristics and implementation differences at individual campuses and how they (program administrators and staff) describe program outcome differences among individual campuses. This chapter will include a summary of results, a discussion of the results, a summary statement of data collected, implications for future research, implications for practice and recommendations, the relationship of results to theory, and a final summary and conclusion of the findings of this study.

Summary of Results

The present study focused on questions regarding how the study participants described the program characteristics and implementation differences at individual campuses and how those participants described the outcome differences among the different campuses. As expected, the differences identified in the UFL Annual Report are not based on a single phenomenon. However, a combination of training protocols, teaching experience of student volunteer facilitators, campus and district administrative support for the UFL Program were more successful, and additional funding sources and human resources must be obtained before the

program can expand while realizing its vision of “creating environments of success where ALL leaders thrive” (Texas Tech University, 2018).

Summary of Results: Orange Elementary

Orange Elementary was a unique experience in that the UFL program has had success in a school and school district that seems to be struggling with changing dynamics in both their economic and racial student population. Rural ISD is dependent on the oil and gas market, and as it ebbs and flows, the economic and ethnic make-up of the school changes drastically. This economic uncertainty affects staffing, staff turnover, and professional development as well as programs and interventions necessary for student success. The UFL program was initially brought in to help students transition from middle school to high school, but after the administration saw the success of the program, they implemented it in fifth and sixth grades as well. However, as Orange Elementary seems to be on the bubble of IR (based on minimum passing threshold on state standardized testing in Texas) and administrators have changed every two years, it is hard to keep consistency in both the programs offered and for administrators to evaluate what is working and what is not working on their campus. The principal also commented that they could do more to promote and expand the things that the UFL were doing with their fifth graders, such as set up mentoring and tutoring for younger students and try to put leadership into action throughout the school day, but the pressure of academic achievement prevented her from doing so. The growth in their data going from the lowest rank score in all of the five C's to two of the highest, mixed with what the facilitators describe as the growth in the intangibles shows that the UFL program can work in the most difficult of situations if implemented with fidelity and with experienced facilitators who genuinely care for the students. The biggest reasons for the success of the program in Rural ISD and Orange Elementary were

the compassion, caring, and consistency of the UFL program and its staff. The college facilitators were treated like rock stars because they made Texas Tech (and the dream of college) seem real to the student participants in the program. The relationships developed during this time were invaluable to the students' growth and development. It was also encouraging to hear that the staff of the UFL up to the director in charge of the program made changes in the curriculum delivery to fit the needs of Orange Elementary because the needs of the specific campus needed more than a "cookie cutter approach. "

Friday is the designated time for the UFL to provide services at Orange Elementary. However, through field interviews, we learned that Friday seems to be a stressful day to have consistent attendance from the student participants as well as the Texas Tech volunteers. Especially in a small town, Friday night lights with all of the students involved in activities such as athletics, band, dance, and cheer make attendance sporadic, and Friday night is a difficult time to encourage college students to volunteer as well. Students that have split custody with parents had trouble attending Friday, and many parents were unwilling to pick up their younger siblings and then come back to pick up their older child who was involved in the UFL program. The following paragraphs compare the Orange Elementary site to the themes that emerged during the study.

Training of Volunteers. The training of volunteers will continue to be a crucial aspect at Orange Elementary. Recruiting and training volunteers who are willing to make the drive to Rural ISD on a Friday and ensuring those particular volunteers are attending biweekly training is essential to make sure students understand the unique nature and challenges of this campus.

Program Fidelity. Program fidelity was less of an issue at Orange elementary because the director and assistant director of the UFL facilitated the overwhelming majority of the

lessons. However, communication between the UFL director and assistant director in training the volunteer staff to work with the unique “campus personality” of Orange Elementary will be paramount if they continue to serve this campus and community in the future.

Adequate Resources. Orange Elementary is an excellent example that adequate resources are necessary in order to grow and replicate the UFL program outside of Lubbock ISD. When any public-school program is grant-funded, there is always the chance that when the grant expires or funding is not secured that the entire program can disappear very quickly. More consistent funding sources for this and other rural districts will be necessary in order to sustain growth in rural, Title I, and districts beyond driving distance to Texas Tech University.

Administrator Support. Administrator support continues to be the most significant issue in this specific site. It is evident from interviews with the UFL staff and principal that this uncertainty and turnover are causing instability in instruction and discipline throughout the campus. Unfortunately, in addition to campus administrative turnover, the superintendent also changed, and the future of the program is in question. Neither the district nor the campus has indicated they want the program terminated, but they have not responded to the UFL’s proposal to continue the program at the time of this study. Turnover of both district and campus leadership with limited relationship building between the UFL and Rural ISD has put the future of the program in jeopardy.

Summary of Results: Morris Elementary

Morris Elementary started as a merger between two Lubbock elementary schools. One of those two schools was part of the original pilot for the UFL program, and from the very first day the doors opened, this particular campus’ parents, students, and administration valued and wanted the UFL to be part of their school culture.

Morris Elementary, by all accounts, is a high achieving campus. Even though they have a diverse student population, the majority (68%) live above poverty and the school provides a climate and culture that tries to pull up students that are having academic deficiencies, discipline issues, or are not having their basic needs met (food, clothing, shelter) while holding to high standards for all children. Students consistently score incredibly high on state status tests and even received distinct designations for their academic achievement in science and post-secondary readiness. In addition to the UFL program, the campus also pushes its students through STEM and other opportunities for academic and social enrichment. It was not surprising to any of the UFL staff or the principal that students from Morris Elementary scored the highest on the pre-and-post PYD scale compared to the other campuses in the study.

The principal of Morris Elementary, and the UFL staff, credited the incredible parent support at the campus for the success of the program as a whole. Parents seem to value their students being a part of the UFL program as shown by students' consistent attendance and retention. Throughout field interviews, subjects commented that parents of the student participants were highly organized and manage their student's time between various academic and extracurricular activities to ensure their child would be in attendance. The UFL program is delivered on Wednesday at Morris Elementary, which avoids Monday holidays and Friday weekend plans.

Several members of the UFL leadership considered Morris the "gold standard" of schools where they offer the program due to the high intellect of the students, incredible parent support, and a supportive and encouraging administration. The following paragraphs compare the Morris Elementary site to the themes that emerged during the study.

Training of Volunteers. The training of volunteers will continue to be an issue across all three campuses as training inconsistencies, and different expectations exist between UFL volunteers and students involved in the CDRC program. It will be challenging to ensure elementary participants the same experience in the program as long as college students are receiving varying levels of training, ranging from biweekly, highly engaged, scenario-based to no training at all.

Adequate Resources. Having adequate resources was not an issue at Morris Elementary, but it serves as an example of how a well-supported and funded program enhances the success of the UFL program and the students it serves.

Program Fidelity. Program fidelity will continue to be an essential variable moving forward. While the UFL staff is facilitating lessons, students are receiving direct instruction from an experienced educator who helped create and develop the curriculum. However, as more and more student volunteers have the opportunity to facilitate lessons, the quality of instruction will be in question based on training, experience, connection with students. One crucial change in having a positive effect started in 2019. There is always a UFL staff member present to help and guide as a student volunteer is facilitating weekly lessons.

Administrator Support. The administrator support provided by Principal Douglas was credited for the success of the UFL at Morris Elementary. It was also encouraging to hear the principal value and use the UFL program as a vehicle to try to take students from different backgrounds, explore their different values, and create a more accepting and positive school environment by helping them develop and recognize their shared values and make better choices. This appreciation of diversity mixed with high achieving and self-motivated students provides an environment where the UFL staff can have productive and meaningful discussions that are

attributed to the success of the program at Morris elementary as well as the high scores on their PYD assessments.

Summary of Results: Henry Elementary

Similar to Morris Elementary, Henry elementary also had a previous connection to the UFL program. The principal was part of one of the original pilot schools as an assistant principal and insisted that the program be offered at Henry when she became the principal because she valued the leadership curriculum as part of the development of the whole child.

Throughout my studies of the UFL Annual Report and field interviews, Henry Elementary is a little bit of an anomaly. On the one hand, the school is a fascinating mix of a neighborhood school that is economically depressed, combined with a highly successful fine arts magnet program and the first elementary IB program in the South Plains area. This combination of students produces a very diverse student body as well as a high percentage of the student body designated as gifted and talented. The school also consistently scores among the best in the West Texas area on state assessments while at the same time producing student-lead fine arts cross-curricular programs every month.

When it comes to the data in the UFL annual report, three things are notable. Henry was the only school that gained students throughout the year; they scored the highest on the PYD pre-test in both character and caring, but the majority of the minimum scores in the areas of competence and connection (especially family connection). They also were the only campus that represented many of the minimum scores on their PYD post-test. When interviewing the UFL staff, they commented that Henry elementary students were “exceptional” and “set the bar “due to the high intellectual level of the student participants and pushed the staff to be on top of their game when it came to facilitating their lessons on the campus. The attendance growth throughout

the year was attributed to multiple factors. First, the UFL offered their program on Monday afternoons, which can be a conflict with both holidays and Lubbock ISD teacher professional development days (which are student holidays). There seems to have been a communication breakdown, and many of the parents were receiving information about UFL registration late. Also, the student population at Henry Elementary is involved in multiple extracurricular activities, and UFL facilitators felt that some students would finish an extracurricular activity before starting the UFL program late. When it came to explaining the difference in data through the pre-and post-test, UFL facilitators and leaders felt that this was a combination of the GT personality that students may not be listening to new information but trying to formulate their own opinion while the facilitator was talking. Students were trying to “beat the test,” meaning that they were trying to formulate the “right answers” rather than reflect their genuine feelings. Additionally, this particular campus has some students of extreme wealth and was the only campus reported by the facilitators in which students were often picked up by a nanny or parent’s secretary rather than the parent of the student. This population of affluent families is also a plausible explanation for the low family connection score.

Overall, the UFL experience at Henry Elementary has been considered an enormous success by parents, students, and the administration and an influential part of the school culture. The physical proximity to the university makes it a desirable and convenient site for college students to volunteer. The following paragraphs compare the Henry Elementary site to the themes that emerged during the study.

Training of Volunteers. Similar to Morris Elementary, the training of volunteers at Henry Elementary will continue to be an issue across all three campuses as training inconsistencies and different expectations exist between UFL volunteers and students involved in

the CDRC program. It will be challenging to ensure elementary participants the same experience in the program as long as college students are receiving varying levels of training, ranging from biweekly, highly engaged, scenario-based training to no training at all. The proximity of the Henry campus to Texas Tech University means that frequently they have more volunteers than they need. Usually, this would be advantageous because it means lowering the student to teacher ratio, but UFL staff reported it could become a distraction and a barrier to building relationships because college students can often outnumber elementary participants.

Adequate Resources. Having adequate resources was not an issue at Henry Elementary, but also serves as an example of how a well-supported and funded program enhances the success of the UFL program.

Program Fidelity. Similar to Morris Elementary, program fidelity will continue to be an essential variable moving forward. While the UFL staff is facilitating lessons, students are receiving direct instruction from an experienced educator who helped create and develop the curriculum. However, as more and more student volunteers have the opportunity to facilitate lessons, the quality of instruction will be in question based on training, experience, and connection with students. One significant change having a positive effect starting in 2019 is that the UFL ensures there will always be a UFL staff member present to help and guide as a student volunteer is facilitating weekly lessons.

Administrator Support. The administrator support of the UFL program on this campus by Principal Breann is a significant factor in the success. Additionally, the shared values of the principal and parents to create not only intellectually capable young people but well-rounded students ready to lead the next generation provides an ideal culture for the UFL program to grow and thrive.

Discussion of Results

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study that deserve consideration concerning future program implementation. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the purpose of the UFL is to enhance student resilience and provide participants with the expertise to be successful throughout their secondary education and beyond. This study investigates the degree to which PYD increased for students participating in the UFL program as well as researches the characteristics at each site that caused variations in student and program outcome data. Findings may also help inform other programs like it in schools in other districts and states.

UFL Program: Successes and Accomplishments

Throughout my interviews with the director, assistant director, coordinator, and facilitators of the UFL program, there seemed to be enormous pride in the accomplishments and successes they had achieved since the program started in 2007. According to Raquel, the UFL director, the founders of the UFL program hoped this would be a successful five-year endeavor, but the program has exceeded expectations and is now serving students in 2020 and celebrating their 12th year of existence. Additionally, the program has grown and expanded services to five different school districts and has also extended the program from fifth and sixth grade to a 7th-12th grade curriculum. They are also exploring partnerships with educational organizations such as Communities in Schools, and 20 other school districts have expressed interested in replicating the program for their students in 5th-12th grades. All of the staff also expressed a sense of pride in their ability to continue to develop meaningful curriculum writing. This includes helping students to build confidence and competence in all of the five C's of the PYD model in a holistic way. Also, the program breadth has expanded to not only mentoring college students but also teaching staff through professional development opportunities. The student facilitators also added that the most significant accomplishments and success of the UFL is the way they teach

leadership through caring and compassion. Both student assistants said that the student participants often teach the facilitators new things, making the experience and intended design come full circle.

UFL Program: Adequate Resources

Another common theme throughout my interviews with the staff and student facilitators was the challenge and limitations that came with limited resources. The UFL is funded through grants, donations, and Texas Tech University. It was apparent at the end of the field research that the shortage in the areas of funding, human resources, and in-kind donations are keeping the program from expanding, serving more schools/students, and hiring additional staff. Currently, the UFL has a limited payroll of the director, assistant director, program coordinator, and two student assistants (paid hourly). Therefore, the majority of their workforce comes from an average of 30 to 35 volunteers a semester, along with students involved in the service-learning programs that require a six-hour field experience. This group of students are typically studying early childhood education, K-12 education, nursing, pre-medicine, and human development and family studies. One of the challenges of relying primarily on student volunteers is that as students graduate out of these programs, which necessitates an entirely new workforce almost every two years. This shortage of funding is also keeping the UFL from expanding. There is a vision from the UFL leadership and demand from school districts all over the South Plains area, but they are unable to take on new schools or school districts due to limited human resources. One of the student assistants, Skyler, shared that she would love for the program to extend to her hometown of Dallas, but does not know how that would be possible with the current staff and leadership available.

All three principals interviewed, also commented that the only limitation of the UFL program was that they had limited seats for their students. They all complimented the UFL staff for their caring, compassion, consistency, and willingness to “make room” every time a principal or teacher believes the program will be beneficial for a student on their campus.

The UFL needs to continue seeking out partnerships with programs such as the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers, which is a \$1.2 billion federal grant program under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This partnership and funding has forced a paradigm shift in priorities for after-school academic and enrichment programs. Continuing to search out federal, state, and local organizations that share the same goals and ideology as the UFL will be essential for their growth and sustainability.

UFL Program: Training and Effects on Curriculum Implementation

The UFL staff works to recruit new and retain returning staff throughout the summer and into August. At the end of August or the beginning of September all new and returning volunteers have an extensive training/induction process in which they are given procedures and policies regarding appropriate relationships with students, dress code, background checks, and time commitment. Following this induction session, volunteers are offered a biweekly, in-depth training on the curriculum that will be presented in the following two weeks. Each UFL lesson includes a nutrition lesson, physical activity, and a lesson revolving around the leadership theme of the week. Volunteers are trained through a face-to-face hands-on training in a group setting. They are given instruction, materials, model lessons, and group talk to ensure familiarity with the curriculum and delivery. Returning and new facilitators act out scenarios so they can respond positively and give student participants nonverbal redirection when they are off task.

Continuing to search out programs such as the expansion of the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers and the National AfterSchool Association models that have worked to recruit local college students into SEL curriculums outside the school day, could potentially enhance the UFL training curriculum. Another strategy from the review of literature would be to work with Texas Tech University to create micro-credentials to show mastery of specific courses and help launch them into their future careers or professional desires. The National AfterSchool Association also changed the training model by focusing on competency rather than seat time. Both of these changes could help motivate college-aged students to be more engaged in the training process. Continuous learning and training are paramount to the success of any after-school program providing academic enrichment (Mitchell, 2019).

The UFL staff ensures that the facilitators are delivering the curriculum with fidelity by establishing a set curriculum with discussion questions and evaluation points for each UFL lesson. Facilitators are allowed to stray from the script as long as they can ensure students understand the main points of the lesson. Therefore, fidelity focuses more on the results, not necessarily delivering the curriculum verbatim. New this year is that the director, assistant director, or program coordinator are present for all of the UFL sessions so if the student facilitator is struggling or a lesson goes sideways, the staff member can ask leading questions of the facilitator and students to help get the lesson back on track. The availability of an experienced facilitator also gives college students time to wait, observe, and learn each “campus personality.” According to both of the student assistants, this has given the volunteer facilitators a safety net to make them feel comfortable, which, in turn, has led to better classroom instruction.

The idea of getting to know the “campus personality” and developing relationships with students is supported by resilience research in that the goal of the UFL is to develop protective factors that help grow and build resilient young people. This is especially true in Rural ISD where college students were giving young people a sense of hope that their current living condition does not determine their future. Research shows that mentoring and student resilience can support achievements when students, community organizations, and churches provide positive role models and social support through after-school and summer programs (Noguera, 2008). Therefore, building positive relationships between staff and participants is the “linchpin of effective after-school programs targeting SEL outcomes” (Hurd & Deutch, 2017, p. 95).

One of the issues raised during field interviews was that not all students attend the biweekly training. Because they are volunteers, attendance is hard to mandate but hurts the quality of programs being presented. Students who miss the training are not be able to facilitate a lesson but are still able to help in small groups or pass out snacks. Also, the students involved through the service-learning programs are encouraged to go to biweekly training but are not required as part of their program. In order to remedy this attendance issue with training, the UFL staff is considering piloting online training in the future. In order to ensure fidelity and the best experience for the students enrolled in the UFL program, the UFL staff must put procedures and structures in place to ensure that all students who are interacting with children are trained. The desire to offer online training might be a significant first step and rectifying this problem.

UFL Program: Administrative Support for the UFL Program

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the themes that seemed to continue to emerge was the campus (and sometimes district) administrator’s attitude, commitment, and desire to have the UFL program on their campus. The most glaring example of this was the

difference in Henry and Morris Elementary Schools whose principals sought out the UFL program because of past positive experiences versus Orange Elementary whose high administrative turnover left the UFL program without a campus or district administrator to champion, advocate, and value the benefits the program could add to their school culture and climate. Additionally, the principals at Henry and Morris Elementary Schools found ways to incorporate and even extend the UFL beyond an after-school program and incorporate the SEL and leadership lessons as an important part of their campus.

Even though it is not necessarily possible or practical to screen principals before launching the UFL at a new site, I think it is critical to inform the campus administration on what is being taught after-school and ways it can be implemented in the classroom and throughout the campus. The adoption of the UFL core values at Henry and Morris Elementary Schools boosted visibility, importance, and a desire for parents to include their children in the after-school program. Relationships with campus administration are even more critical when there is a change in the building principal, as proven in the analysis of the UFL program at Orange Elementary. It would also be a good idea for the UFL to share data like the Yang Report with district administrators so they can see real, quantifiable data on the benefits the UFL program is having on the student participants and the campus as a whole. In the example of Rural ISD, at the time of this study, no district representative had said they do not value or want to continue the program. On the contrary, the superintendent told the UFL director verbally that he wanted to continue the program. However, the deadline had passed, and there had been no follow up to the proposal submitted by Rural ISD to the UFL.

This recommendation is supported by Kiswarday's research on resiliency programs, specifically by exploring when administrators work to create a positive protective environment

then school climate, attendance, and academic achievement will also rise. This change in mindset requires teachers and administrators to adopt a practice of prevention and intervention. Building principals have an enormous responsibility in hiring teachers and staff who create a culture of care and concern for all students on their campuses.

Relationship of Results to Theory

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Program Theory is centered on the hypothesis that a program's design, undertakings, and implementation will lead to the attainment of the results you intend for the after-school program, school, students, and teachers ("An Introduction to Program Theory," 2019, para. 2). The conceptual framework for this study was developed by the CAR and UFL program to grow social and emotional learning in its student participants. The purpose of the research in this study was to understand the conceptual framework, Positive Youth Development (PYD), and the inputs, outputs, and expected outcomes of the after-school program for three specific elementary sites who implemented the UFL program as an after-school enrichment for their students and explore what factors led to varying levels of success based on attendance or retention and data obtained by the pre and post PYD survey administered by the program.

Program Theory is centered on the hypothesis that a program's design, undertakings, and implementation will lead to the attainment of the results you intend for the after-school program, school, students, and teachers ("An Introduction to Program Theory," 2019, para. 2). Therefore, true to the PTE model, it is essential to use data and research to test what is it about the program that is causing the outcomes. The success of Program Theory in the field requires a fundamental understanding of the area, and the creation of a strong Program Theory should be created by the program planner, not the evaluator. The relationship built between the UFL staff and myself

during the research and interview processes were paramount in achieving a robust program evaluation.

Program Theory evaluation (PTE) contains an explicit theory or model of how the program bases the intended outcomes and an assessment partially directed by this model. The purpose of using a PTE is to test which variables in the program are causing the results. (Rogers, Hacsı, Petrosino, & Huebner, 2000). Specific to this study, *inputs* including staff, financial, and program materials and supplies were all deemed necessary to produce a specific outcome aligned to the programs' mission and vision. As discussed above, financial and human resources are a massive roadblock to the UFL in expanding its mission to more schools that have requested both the program and curriculum. Limited paid staff and reliance on student volunteers are likely the biggest reason for varying results between campuses.

Given the inputs above, the following *outputs* were produced, including the UFL 18-week fifth-grade leadership program, biweekly staff training, and curriculum development. The program curriculum is both research-based and proven effective given implementation with fidelity. However, reliance on volunteer staff and facilitators who do not always attend training regularly continues to affect program implementation negatively.

The *expected outcomes* from the program were evaluated through the positive youth development survey given to all fifth graders before and after their experience in the UFL program. The program also expected short-term outcomes that included a shift and awareness of themes. The program also hoped to have medium and long-term outcomes that included helping the people around them thrive, development and understanding of autonomy, and fostering a sense of resiliency or the ability to bounce back through adversity. These outcomes are being achieved on all campuses implementing the UFL. The level of student growth is affected by

inconsistencies in both the input and output sections of this model. Especially in the areas of the training of student volunteers, student volunteers' delivery of curriculum consistently and with fidelity, and additional funding sources and human resources must be obtained before the program can expand successfully.

Implications

The implications of this study's findings are consequential for SEL programs, schools, and communities. School districts across the country have begun implementing SEL programs for their students, Pre-K-12, to combat the growing epidemics of bullying, suicide, and school shootings. In Texas, the legislature passed HB 1026 in 2019, requiring that school districts must implement a character education program. These programs must include the following ten character traits: "courage, trustworthiness (honest, reliability, punctuality, loyalty) , integrity, respect and courtesy, responsibility (accountability, diligence, perseverance, and self-control) , fairness (justice and freedom from prejudice), caring (kindness, empathy, compassion, consideration, patience, generosity, and charity), good citizenship (patriotism, concern for the common good and the community, and respect for authority and the law), school pride, and gratitude" (House Bill No. 1026, 2019). This new law will force school districts to quickly evaluate and implement SEL programs for 5.5 million students in Texas public schools. As mentioned in Chapter 1, findings of this study may stimulate administrators in the area, across the State of Texas, and the country to evaluate and apply resiliency stratagems to nurture and grow aptitude in all students so that they may grow their abilities and have the chance to succeed intellectually and socially in their academic capabilities, family, and society as a whole (Austin, 2002).

Research on SEL and curricular programs are plentiful, but little research has been done on the implementation of these programs across different sites or evaluation of the effectiveness of program design. Given this lack of attention to program evaluation, and more specifically to process evaluation, the purpose of this study was to examine program outcomes of three different elementary schools in the South Plains region of the West Texas area who implemented the UFL program as after-school enrichment.

Implications for Future Research

Additional qualitative research in the areas of program evaluation and program implementation is warranted. School officials cannot merely buy a packaged SEL program and hope that it works. The same can be said for technology-based programs as well. Placing a school aged child in front of a device and pushing play is not going to magically boost their SEL and make them better, more adjusted young adults.

Since the passage HB 1026 by the Texas Legislature in 2019, mandating that school districts must adopt a character education program, school districts and communities they serve will begin debating what character traits they value, goals for potential curriculum adoption, and ways to evaluate and implement SEL programs for the students they serve.

There are many studies on program evaluation and even on the program evaluation of SEL programs for school-aged children. However, even program evaluations like the Harvard Graduate School of Education study conducted in 2017 of the leading 25 SEL programs did not have any data collected regarding implementation. Ultimately, it is going to be the teacher or program facilitator that will determine whether the program can and will be successful. For this reason, there must be future research evaluating the implementation and not just programs and their curriculum.

Implications for Practice and Recommendations

Based on data analysis of the UFL Programming Research Report as well as interviews with the director and assistant director of the UFL, some program recommendations would be the following: Enhanced and mandated training of college-aged student volunteers, as well as researchers, would be needed to ensure validity and integrity of the program, especially in rural communities removed from the greater Lubbock area. Implementation at different sites follows the same structure when the director/assistant director is facilitating, but it has been difficult to maintain integrity when younger student volunteers are serving as facilitators. The biggest challenge going forward needs to be better communication with the principal or site manager in charge of each school to ensure a conducive learning environment where students and facilitators can work in an appropriate environment in which the UFL curriculum focused on growing leadership development and SEL is valued and expanded throughout the school and becomes part of the campus culture. Adequate resources are necessary to grow the program to additional campuses and districts, hire additional full-time staff to ensure fidelity of implementation regarding facilitating curriculum, and offer other after-school programs and districts away from the South Plains the ability to replicate the UFL curriculum.

Summary and Conclusion

The 21st-century has seen a dramatic turn towards school accountability based on standardized test scores. One of the unintended consequences of this trend in education is that the educational system as a whole has stopped seeing students as people, but instead passing rates and success on high stakes testing. School has often been a solution to society's issues from the industrial revolution, desegregation, the space race, the food pyramid, to anti-drug education,

gang intervention, and so many more major issues. However, the emphasis on high stakes testing has come at a cost.

The rise of school shootings, teen suicide, drug overdose, and bullying are now at the forefront of the American consciousness; therefore, teachers and administrators are now being tasked to solve these monumental issues and literally save lives (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014). SEL at its core is trying to develop both self-correcting behaviors and building up a “positive bank” to deposit behavior attributes that build self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and autonomy so when young people are confronted with life’s challenges, they have the social and emotional skills to persevere and overcome using positive behaviors. States such as Texas have now mandated SEL as part of the K-12 curriculum. The challenge moving forward is how to fit SEL into a state-mandated state curriculum that is almost impossible to teach in one year’s time. Administrators must possess the ability to evaluate programs, approve curriculum, secure funding, train staff, supervise implementation, and evaluate results in real time. This is especially difficult when a campus administrator is tasked with turning a school around or keeping a campus off the IR list or, as now in Texas, becoming an “F” campus or district.

After teaching high school band for 20 years, and now as an administrator, I believe now more than ever that programs such as fine arts, athletics, and CTE are essential to help young people find a positive place to belong in their school, enhance academic success, and most of all keep students motivated to want to come to school. Of all of my accomplishments as a music educator, I am most proud that I was able to create a “band family” where all students were welcome and felt comfortable despite the turmoil that many were facing in their own lives. I firmly believe that if every student was a member of a positive peer group and connected to a trusted adult when each stepped into the school building, many issues facing our schools would

be eliminated. Unfortunately, in our current education system these “elective classes” are being taken away in order to make room for remedial reading and math (Donalson & Halsey, 2007). As an educational community and a community at large, we must come to a consensus that our most important job as educators is to produce well-rounded and well-adjusted young people, who can think and create so they are ready to take on the world’s challenges, not just students who can regurgitate information for a test. Programs like the UFL seek to accomplish this goal as an after-school program so support teachers in reaching this goal.

Throughout my career, I have been blessed to see students overcome tremendous obstacles in their young lives toward becoming amazing productive adults. I have observed that teachers, counselors, and administrators all know students who, at the first sign of adversity quit, withdraw, or throw up their hands and cry. This mindset allows for a victim mentality to develop and does not afford students the ability to value the life lessons learned from experiencing hardships. In contrast, resilient people learn from these obstacles and work to make sense of setbacks for themselves and the people around them. (Coutu, 2002). However, I have also seen students completely quit after the first sign of adversity. SEL has been recognized as a vehicle to raise students’ resiliency and their scholastic success (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). It is time to invest our young people as people to create the world we want for our children and grandchildren.

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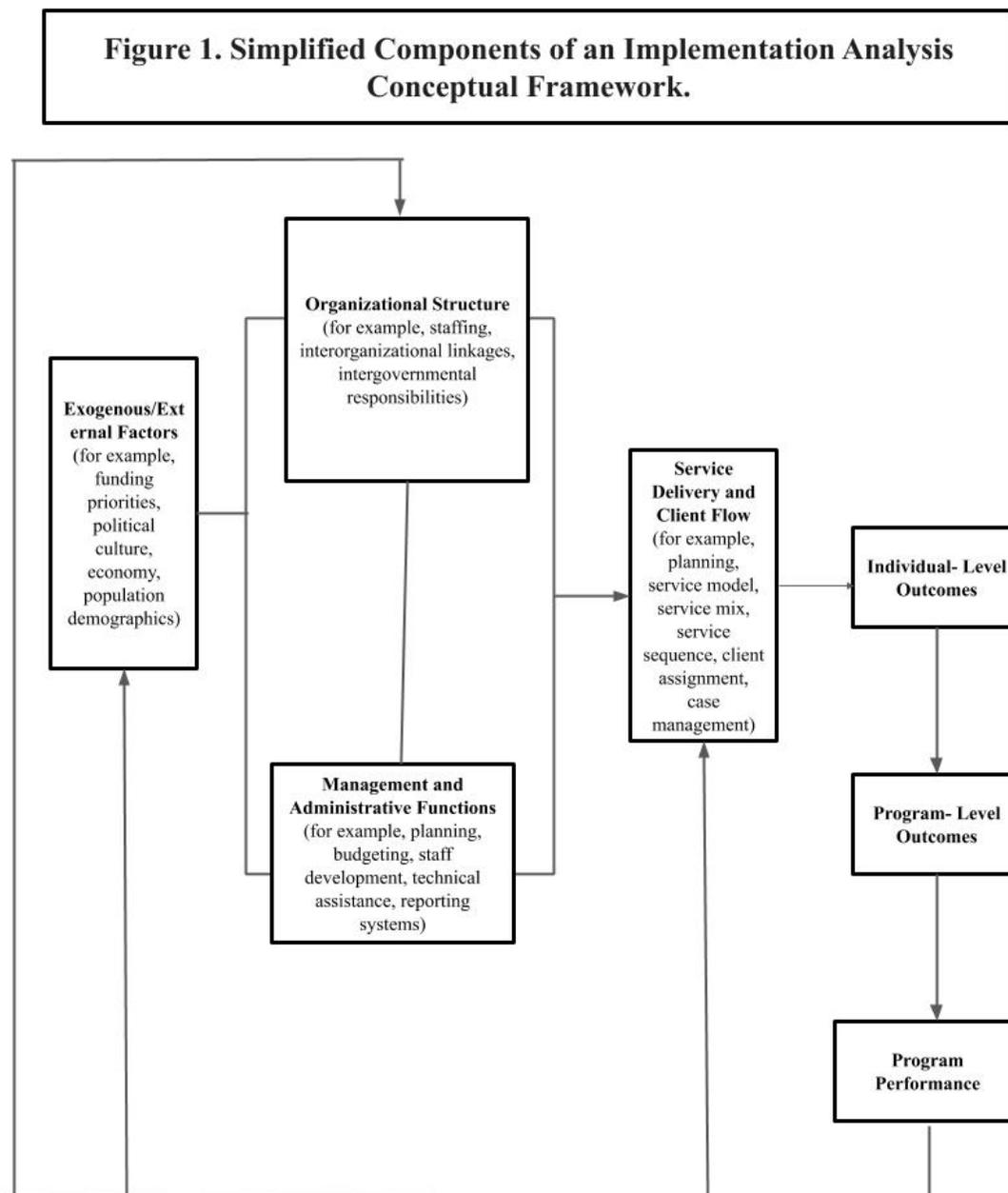
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Appendix A



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Appendix B

Interview Protocol UFL Director, Assistant Director, Site Facilitator

Background Information

1. Please share background information about yourself.
 - a. Name
 - b. Age
 - c. Education
 - d. Number of years in the CAR and/or UFL

Background in Education

2. Tell me about your career in education before coming to the UFL. (If Applicable)
 - a. How many years in education
 - b. What roles did you have?
 - c. How many years in each role?

Highs and Lows of the UFL Program

3. What are some of the biggest accomplishments/successes of the UFL program?
4. What are some of the biggest frustrations/limitations of the program?

Highs and Lows of the Elementary sites in the UFL Program

5. What are some of your biggest accomplishments/successes at each campus?
6. What are some of your biggest challenges at each campus?
7. *What are some internal/external factors that cause these frustrations?*

Training and Professional Development

8. Tell me about the training provided to facilitate the UFL curriculum?
 - a. How often does training occur?
 - b. How is training delivered?
 - c. How are do you ensure facilitators are delivering the curriculum with fidelity?

Changes in the Elementary sites in the UFL Program

9. What changes or interventions were put in place following the 2017-18 UFL Annual Report?
10. What were the results of those interventions or changes?

Interview Protocol Principals of UFL Sites

Background Information

1. Please share background information about yourself.
 - a. Name
 - b. Age
 - c. Education
 - d. Number of years UFL is (or was) on your campus?

Background in Education

2. Tell me about your career in education.
 - a. How many years in education
 - b. What roles did you have?
 - c. How many years in each role?

Background of the Elementary Site

3. Tell me about your school.
4. What are some of your biggest “points of pride” on your campus?
5. What are some of your biggest challenges on your campus?
6. *What are some internal/external factors that cause these frustrations?*

Choosing the UFL Program?

7. Why did you choose (or continue) the UFL Program on your campus?
8. What value did you hope it would add to your students? Campus?

Highs and Lows of the UFL Program

9. What are some of the biggest accomplishments/successes of the UFL program on your campus?
10. What are some of the biggest frustrations/limitations of the program on your campus?