

Title of presentation:

Applying implementation science to build school implementation capacity to prevent bullying

Name of presenter:

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Abstract:

Preventing student bullying behaviours is a complex social issue in schools worldwide with 25% of Australian school children reporting they are frequently bullied. *Friendly Schools* is a universal, school-based intervention that aims to create safe and supportive school environments and prevent bullying by enhancing student's social and emotional learning through schools' implementation of evidence-based policy and practice. *Friendly Schools* has been developed and empirically tested through 13 major research projects (including 5 RCT's) involving over 27,000 students, their teachers, parents and school leaders. Whilst these research projects have included capacity supports for staff in the ways of training and materials, a systematic approach to implementation was needed to support real world schools to achieve positive outcomes for students. This presentation will present the findings of a longitudinal, multi-site case study research project, involving seven schools over four years, which aimed to develop and refine an implementation model and capacity building supports in preparation for scale up of *Friendly Schools* to all Australian schools. The application of current implementation frameworks (Interactive Systems Framework for Implementation and Dissemination, Active Implementation Frameworks and other models of quality implementation) to inform the development of the implementation model and capacity supports will be described.

Using qualitative methods, case study schools as naturalistic settings were observed to gain insight into how school's used the implementation model and capacity building tools to assess needs, select evidence-based practices and implement change. Regular feedback loops enabled refinement of the model and tools and identified factors affecting implementation quality. These tools have formed an online implementation management system that guides school leaders through the implementation process, collates school practice assessment and student and staff survey data, provides timely access to training and tools for facilitating staff buy-in and allows teams to plan, monitor and review progress and success. Findings from this research will be discussed including the challenges in working with purveyors and education systems in facilitating the translation of evidence into real world practice and schools as organisations implementing complex social interventions.

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