8-13-2024

Improving the Educational Experience of Students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

Sarah E. Bates
Western University, sbates2@uwo.ca

Abstract

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is recognized as one of the leading causes of developmental disability in the Western world (Flannigan et al., 2018). The Public Health Agency of Canada (2017) defines FASD as a "brain injury that can occur when an unborn baby is exposed to alcohol. It's a lifelong disorder with effects that include physical, mental, behavioural and learning disabilities. These can vary from mild to severe". Its prevalence is estimated at 4% of the population. This implies that approximately 4% of students have FASD, which in turn means that they may face elevated risks of encountering learning and behavioural challenges. These difficulties may manifest as developmental disabilities and speech-language deficits, often necessitating specialized educational interventions. (Chudley et al., 2005; Flannigan et al., 2018; Popova et al., 2016). As such, this DiP presents educators in the Silver Maple District School Board (a pseudonym) with a framework to facilitate the development of strategies and skills required for the improved educational experience for students with FASD. The adoption of the strategies and solutions outlined in this DiP and the suggested professional development will result in an overall improvement in the educational experiences of students with FASD. Improving educational experiences has the potential to improve all areas of a student's life, which is the ultimate goal of education.

Keywords: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT), middle leadership, stigmatization

Executive Summary

The heart and soul of this Dissertation-in-Practice is the underserved population of students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The Public Health Agency of Canada (2017) defines FASD as a "brain injury that can occur when an unborn baby is exposed to alcohol. It's a lifelong disorder with effects that include physical, mental, behavioural and learning disabilities. These can vary from mild to severe". Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is recognized as one of the leading causes of developmental disability in the Western world (Flannigan et al., 2018). Despite the prevalence of this disability, this population remains an exceedingly underserved population, not only in SMDSB but across the province.

Chapter 1 of this Dissertation-in-Practice (DiP) introduces the central problem of practice: improving the educational experiences of students with FASD within the SMDSB. Through the story of Avery, a student with FASD, the chapter highlights the challenges these students face and the current gaps in educator understanding and support. It also outlines the author's positionality as a Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) and the leadership frameworks, including Indigenous and transformative leadership that guide the approach to addressing this issue. The chapter sets the stage for the need for systemic change. It frames the problem within the broader context of educational inequities and the need for more informed and supportive teaching practices for students with FASD.

Chapter 2 delves into the leadership approaches necessary for driving change within SMDSB. It discusses middle and ecological leadership as key frameworks for influencing and enacting change without formal authority. Kotter's 8-Step Change Model (K8SCM) is introduced as a structured guide for the change process. The chapter also assesses the organizational readiness for change, using tools to evaluate the current state and the potential for

implementing new practices. Ethical considerations, particularly the ethic of care and the impact of colonial practices on Indigenous students are explored to ensure that the proposed changes are inclusive and equitable. The chapter concludes by presenting three potential solutions: engaging the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), providing professional development and professional learning communities with staff support, and a detailed comparison of their strengths and challenges.

Chapter 3 focuses on implementing, communicating, monitoring, and evaluating the proposed changes. It outlines a comprehensive plan for professional development tailored to the needs of educators working with students with FASD. Communication strategies, including interactive workshops, regular updates, and digital platforms, are emphasized to keep all interest groups informed and engaged. The chapter also discusses the importance of creating a volunteer army and removing barriers to enable action. Monitoring and evaluation are addressed through the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle, ensuring continuous improvement and adaptation of the strategies based on feedback and data. The chapter emphasizes the need for sustained efforts and the institutionalization of changes to ensure a lasting impact on the educational experiences and well-being of students with FASD.

Overall, this DiP aims to create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for students with FASD within SMDSB. Through effective leadership, comprehensive professional development, and robust communication strategies, the initiative seeks to transform educational practices and improve these students' overall well-being and academic achievement. The focus is on reframing educator perceptions, enhancing understanding and support, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and equity in education.

Acknowledgments

When watching an actor receive an Academy Award or when seeing an athlete speak in a press conference after winning a championship, one often hears statements such as "I couldn't have done this alone" or "There are so many people I owe this win to." These comments always seemed so trite until I reflected on whom I need to acknowledge and thank in the completion of my Dip and the entirety of this degree of Doctor of Education. There have been countless colleagues, friends, and family members who have offered support, kindness, and conversation throughout this process. Much like an actor or an athlete, I truly couldn't have done this alone. However, with that being said there are some specific individuals I do need to acknowledge.

Dr. Meghann Lloyd, thank you for getting this dream started with me. Bad pancakes.

Keri Declue & Kelly Wheeler, life would not be doable without your patience, support, friendship and love. You stand by me through everything and I will never be able to express how much you both mean to me.

Dr. John Portelli, without your direction throughout my Masters of Education I would not be at this stage. I will forever me grateful for your teachings, wisdom, knowledge and poetry.

Bill Tibbo, for helping me feel like I fit in my intellectual "skin" and for encouraging me to do big things. You gave me the confidence to apply and have helped me battle my demon: "Imposter Syndrome". I will forever stand by the sentiment that everyone needs a 'Bill' in his or her life.

"The Family" – Nicole Brouwer, Lindy Henderson and Shannon Wellwood, I would not have finished without the unwavering support the three of you have provided me since our very first class. From Family Meetings to check-ins to editing to phone calls, I know that I would not have finished without you. I will never again see a pineapple and not think of "The Family".

Dr. Planche, thank you for being my last minute editor and support person. Your fast turn around and gracious commentary has been invaluable.

Dr. Yee, for teaching me how one eats an elephant. Your support and patience has meant the world to me. Words truly can't express my gratitude.

Dr. Lowrey, your switching around of a letter from "Just a teacher" to "A just teacher" altered not only the trajectory of my academic studies but also the trajectory of my life. Whenever I needed you through this process you were always willing to meet and talk. You had faith in me when I didn't have faith in myself. I appreciate you more than you could ever know.

Nan, our kitchen table conversations instilled in me a love of learning, taught me to think deeply and to strive for higher education. I know you would have been proud. I miss you.

Roberto, the sincerity in your voice when you ask the question "How are you?" and the constant offers of support have made this journey possible. I love you. Don't worry; I don't expect you to read it.

MHRD, a race may be a competition of speed, but this doctorate was a journey. Thank you for your support. MBRD

Sister, you are named.

Alexander R. Macdonald, my mango, from a stack vent to a vent stack, thank you for reminding me to always take life one pipe at a time. `

Momma, you have been the editor of every paper or essay I have written since Grade 6. When you knew there was nothing you could offer for help, you sat in the living room, quietly knitting and making me tea until all hours while I madly read and typed. You know that my default mode is procrastination and last-minute panic. You haven't tried to change that and have supported me when I'm pushing hard to a deadline. You've footed the bill for tuition and taken

out loans so I could reach my academic goals without having to worry about financial burdens. You've taken the lead with Lily too many times to count. There really and truly are no words to express how much I appreciate you. You've earned a doctorate alongside me.

And Lily, you are my reason for everything. Thank you for your patience every time I said, "I'm sorry, baby, I have to write." Nothing would be worth doing without you in my life. I hope this has shown you that with hard work and perseverance, just about anything is possible— well, except maybe becoming an NBA centre. I love you.

Disclaimer

This Dissertation in Practice contains themes of addiction, alcoholism, the use of these substances during pregnancy and the related exposure on children. It explores the struggles and challenges associated with these issues, which may be distressing or triggering for some readers. Reader discretion is advised. If you or someone you know is struggling with addiction, please reach out to the Ontario Drug and Alcohol Helpline at 1-800-565-8603 for assistance.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Table

List of Acronyms

ASD   Autism Spectrum Disorder

DAP   Directors Annual Plan

DiP   Dissertation-in-Practice

FASD   Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

FNMI   First Nations, Metis, & Inuit

GET   General Education Teacher

HO   Hybrid Option

IDT   Interdisciplinary Team

IEP   Individual Education Plan

IPRC   Identification, Placement, Review, and Committee

IWA   Influence without Authority Model

KMb   Knowledge Mobilization

K8SCM   Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

OME   Ontario Ministry of Education

MYSP   Multi-Year Strategic Plan

PDSA   Plan-Do-Study-Act

PoP   Problem of Practice

SEN   Special Education Needs

SERT   Special Education Resource Teacher

SMDSB   Silver Maple District School Board

Definitions

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)[1]: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a

term used to cover various diagnoses. These include Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Partial FAS

(pFAS), Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND), and Alcohol-Related Birth

Defects (ARBD) (Lange et al., 2019; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005). Children and

adolescents with FASD have an increased probability of living with learning and behavioural

problems and the potential for developmental disabilities and speech-language deficits (Popova

et al., 2016). These needs often require special education programming (Duke University, n.d.).

General Education Teacher (GET): A GET is a teacher who teaches in a mainstream

classroom.

Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC): An IPRC is a committee that is

legislated by the Ontario Education Act under Reg. 181/98 to identify exceptional students.

Individual Education Plan (IEP): An IEP is an official working document that is used to

establish and maintain the exceptional needs of an individual student that cannot be met through

the standard administration of the Ontario curriculum (The Association for Bright Children of

Ontario, n.d.)

Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT): A SERT is a teacher who has education and

additional qualifications in special education programs and services and who works outside of

the mainstream classroom setting.

---

[1] In North America, the spelling of fetal is utilized. The spelling utilized in the United Kingdom, Australia, and other Commonwealth Countries is foetal. However, in North American medical and scientific journals, the spelling of foetal is commonly used. All are acceptable spellings. For this Dissertation in Practice, the spelling of fetal will be used unless being directly quoted.

Chapter 1: Problem Posing

Avery[2] is a teenager in high school. Avery loves music, basketball, and hanging out with friends. Avery puts on a streetwise persona and brags about the various (alleged) illegal activities in which they participate. One-on-one, on the other hand, Avery will talk about their favourite Disney movie and play board games with anyone who dares to attempt to beat their winning streak. Within seconds, Avery can swing from calm and happy to violent and full of rage, from high-fives and laughter to threatening with makeshift weapons and stinging words. Avery has the reading comprehension level of a kindergartener, but their ability to express themselves orally masks this. Avery has a story of abandonment, trauma, adoption, loving parents, and the reality of living every day with the impact of prenatal alcohol and drug exposure. Avery has a diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

This description of Avery is a representational composite of students living with FASD whom I have encountered over my last twenty years in education. The composite represents some of the experiences that I have observed of the estimated 4% of students who have been formally diagnosed with FASD (Flannigan et al., 2018) or have been flagged with a suspected diagnosis of FASD. FASD is an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual whose mother consumed alcohol during pregnancy. These effects may include physical, mental, behavioural, and learning disabilities with lifelong implications. According to guidelines provided by the Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network (CanFASD, 2024) and the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ), FASD is a diagnostic term that describes a range of physical, cognitive, and behavioural effects resulting from prenatal

---

[2] Avery is a representational composite of a variety of students with FASD that I have worked with and encountered over the past twenty-plus years in education. Any resemblance to actual persons or actual events is purely coincidental.

alcohol exposure. These effects can vary in severity and may include growth deficiencies, facial abnormalities, central nervous system dysfunction, and a spectrum of neurodevelopmental impairments. The diagnosis of FASD requires a comprehensive assessment by a multidisciplinary team and includes a detailed review of the patient's medical and social history, behaviour, and physical examination (Chudley, 2018).

FASD is recognized as one of the leading causes of developmental disability in the Western world (Flannigan et al., 2018). Compared with other common disabilities, at an "estimated prevalence of 4%, FASD is at least 2.5 times more common than Autism Spectrum Disorder, 19 times more common than Cerebral Palsy, 28 times more common than Down Syndrome [and] 40 times more common than Tourette's Syndrome" (Flannigan et al., 2018, p. 3). The extensive research and literature on FASD diagnoses well represent students affected by FASD, marking FASD as a particular point of focus for educators (Blackburn, 2017; Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network, 2021; Duke University, n.d.; FASD Ontario, 2022; Frederiksen & Nissinen, 2022; Popova et al., 2016; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005 & 2017; Roozen et al., 2022; Spohr et al., 2018; Wolfson et al., 2019).

The composite presented above also includes the experiences of some Indigenous individuals identified within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action. The TRC's 10th, 12th, 33rd, and 34th Calls to Action are particularly relevant to education and FASD, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to FASD in education for Indigenous students (Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network, 2021; Centre for Excellence for Women's Health, 2017; Edmonton and Area Fetal Alcohol Network Society, 2023; Nathoo & Poole, 2017; Yousefi & Cahufan, 2022). In the context of the Silver Maple District School Board (SMDSB, a pseudonym), implementing these Calls to Action can bridge

the gaps in educational outcomes for Indigenous students affected by FASD. By developing culturally appropriate curricula and providing adequate funding and support, SMDSB can create an inclusive educational environment that addresses the specific needs of these students. This approach not only improves educational attainment and success rates but also reduces the long-term social and economic costs associated with FASD. Importantly, embracing these Calls to Action is not just a necessity but also aligns with SMDSB's commitment to equity and inclusion, fostering a more just and supportive educational system for all students.

Despite the prevalence of FASD and the existing research on how to best educate students with this diagnosis, educators need an understanding of the diagnosis, what it means, and how to help these students achieve academic success. Avery is not an anomaly in my world. Through my experiences and observations as a Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT), I have come to recognize that students with FASD require and deserve an education they still need to receive within the education system (Edmonton and Area Fetal Alcohol Network Society, 2023; Jongens, 2017; Popova et al., 2016; Riley et al., 2011;). With this knowledge, I set out with my DiP to make changes for all the Avery's within the SMDSD. In this Chapter, I discuss the complexity of FASD and its impact on students in educational settings. I emphasize the need for a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to diagnosis and support, highlighting the diverse and challenging behaviours associated with FASD. I also underscore the importance of addressing the unique needs of Indigenous students with FASD, aligning with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Additionally, I reiterate my commitment to transformative leadership and inclusive education practices, providing reassurance and confidence in our collective efforts to improve outcomes for all students with FASD.

Leadership Position, Positionality, and Lens

My passion as an educator lies in my commitment to improving the learning experiences of students who require Special Education support and students who have been marginalized and are underserved by the education system. As a transformative leader, I strive to establish inclusive and equitable learning experiences for all students (Shields, 2018). Transformative leadership involves challenging and changing organizational practices that perpetuate inequity and injustice. It focuses on creating systemic change by empowering individuals and fostering a culture of collaboration and respect (Shields, 2018). The sections below address my leadership position, roles and responsibilities within my organization, and my personal leadership lens and ways of knowing.

Personal Leadership Position

I am a Caucasian, middle-class, English-speaking, third-generation Canadian of solely British descent. I am cisgender and identify as female. I am a single parent of an Indigenous youth. Parenting a child of Indigenous ancestry has allowed me to observe and participate in my daughter's community as a trusted ally. I have spent most of my twenty-two-year career working in Special Education, specifically in behavioural programs. As a SERT on an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT), I serve 25 elementary and secondary schools. I work with Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) students. Many of the students on my caseload have a diagnosis of FASD or a suspected diagnosis of FASD. For me, this work is deeply personal. Students on my caseload have gone from a mainstream classroom to receiving increasingly supported and intensive interventions. These students have received additional support from school-based SERTs, Special Education Consultants and various para-professionals (i.e., Social Workers, Speech and Language

Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Psychologists and Behaviour

Analysts).

Support needs for students are measured on a three-tier basis, and students on my

caseload have been identified as requiring a minimum of Tier 3 support. Tier 1 involves

gathering information about students' strengths, needs, and interests to tailor instruction using

Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction principles. A class profile is

utilized to understand students' learning styles, emphasizing the importance of social, emotional,

and academic skills. In Tier 2, teachers observe and differentiate instruction, implementing

interventions for students needing additional support based on assessment data. A growth plan is

developed, monitored, and discussed with an In-School Team comprising teachers, parents,

support staff, and administrators to adjust strategies and resources as needed. Tier 3 addresses the

needs of a smaller group of students requiring more intensive support. An interdisciplinary team

approach involves Student Services staff addressing various needs such as learning, behaviour,

and social-emotional skills. Figure 1 illustrates the tiered support model used by SMDSB. This

approach emphasizes early intervention strategies before formal processes like an Individualized

Program Review Committee (IPRC) (see Figure 1). A student with FASD could receive support

at any of the three Tiers. However, as mentioned above, any student on my caseload would be in

Tier 3. I have also observed that FASD students most often require Tier 3 support.

Figure 1

Tiered Support in Silver Maple District School Board
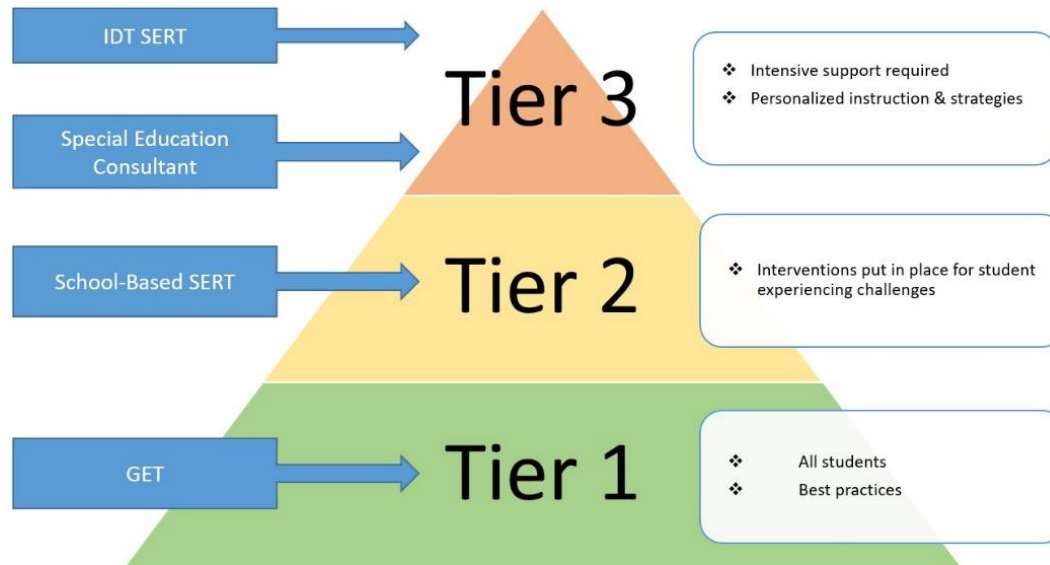
Note. This figure shows the tiers of support that students can receive within the SMDSB. It was created based on the information provided on the publicly available SMDSB Website (2022).

Role and Responsibilities within the Organization

Although I am able to provide the students on my caseload with the necessary support, as a special education resource teacher, my perceived sphere of influence needs to be improved. Teachers often need access to additional fiscal resources or personnel, which could provide increased support to students with FASD. Moreover, teachers cannot influence what professional development the school board mandates. After years of observing and experiencing first-hand the frustrations of students with FASD, I know that something needs to be done to address the inequity in the educational lives of these students. However, my thoughts have overwhelmingly followed the line of "what can I do? I'm *just* a teacher." Thankfully, when I approached a

treasured mentor about my lack of agency as a teacher, he helped me reflect on my journey as an educator, scholar, learner, mother, and human.

My mentor helped me reflect on my belief systems and reminded me that I strive to apply the work of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire in all my classroom interactions. Freire's pedagogy emphasizes the importance of dialogue, critical thinking, and the co-creation of knowledge, which are essential elements of transformative education. By applying Freire's principles (2007), I aim to foster a learning environment where students feel valued, heard, and empowered to contribute to their learning processes. This approach challenges the traditional banking model of education where students are passive recipients of knowledge and instead promotes active engagement and critical reflection. Freire's banking model of education describes a traditional teaching method where teachers "deposit" knowledge into passive students, who receive and store the information without engaging in critical thinking or dialogue. The hierarchical structures of model reinforces hierarchical structures and suppresses students' creativity and critical faculties by treating them as empty vessels rather than active participants in their learning process. Freire advocates for a more interactive and participatory problem-posing model, which emphasizes dialogue, critical reflection, and the co-construction of knowledge.

Moreover, those in education who advocate for Freirean pedagogies are better equipped to implement policies and practices that prioritize student voice and agency (Achieng-Evensen et al., 2021; Alford, 2002). This approach not only enhances the educational experience but also prepares students to be critical thinkers and active participants in their communities. By fostering a culture of dialogue and collaboration, school leaders can cultivate a more inclusive school environment that respects and values diverse perspectives and populations. Ultimately, applying

Freire's work in educational leadership is about creating a more just and equitable education system that empowers all students to succeed.

I believe that justice-oriented work requires disrupting traditional teaching methods to transform schools. As Freire (2007) espouses, "to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it…Human beings are not built for silence, but in word, in work and in action-reflection" (p.88). This is the ideal I strive for as an educator.

My mentor and I discussed a seminal piece of writing that influenced me by Thousand et al. (1999) entitled *Perspectives on a Freirean Dialectic to Promote Inclusive Education*, which centred on me as a just teacher embracing a critical pedagogical perspective. I was reminded to organize against isolation deliberately, form alliances with students and adults whenever possible, and build multiracial and multicultural partnerships (Thousand et al., 1999). I actively oppose discrimination, regularly examine my practices, and commit to social justice and peace. I oppose classroom practices that undermine children's rights, hold high expectations for all students, and strive to promote a child-centred curriculum.

After these reflections and discussions on my social justice-mindedness, my mentor proposed changing the order of my words from "I'm *just a* teacher" to "I'm *a just* teacher." With that, I began to see myself as more than just a teacher but a just and justice-seeking educator and leader who would strive to provide an equitable and inclusive educational experience for all students, particularly those with FASD. From an educational leadership perspective, incorporating Freire's philosophy is crucial for addressing system inequities and promoting social justice within the school system. Leaders who embrace these principles encourage teachers to create more inclusive and participatory classrooms, which can lead to improved educational outcomes for all students, particularly those from marginalized communities, such as

those students with FASD. This alignment with Freire's work helps to dismantle power imbalances and supports the development of a more equitable education system. Thus, it is through this lens that I centre myself as a just teacher and leader.

Middle Leadership

In his text, *Successful Middle Leadership in Secondary Schools* Flemming (2019) defines *middle leadership* as the layer of leaders between senior management and classroom practitioners. Figure 2 shows my role as IDT SERT in relation to middle leadership. I am in a position to work with centrally assigned staff and school-based administrators as well as school-based teaching staff such as General Education Teachers (GET) and support staff. This position allows me to have a scope of influence with both administration and teaching staff. As a middle leader who is a just teacher, I can relate to those in classroom settings and provide these colleagues with a more trusting relationship. In my experience, there is, sadly but without a doubt, an "us vs. them" attitude when looking at the relationship between administration and teaching staff. Through theories of middle leadership, I can act as the bridge between the two sides to benefit students with FASD. Using theories of middle leadership allows me to influence those who have control over what happens in schools for professional development and those who will be receiving the professional development—and who, ultimately, will determine the implementation.

Figure 2

IDT SERT as Middle Leader
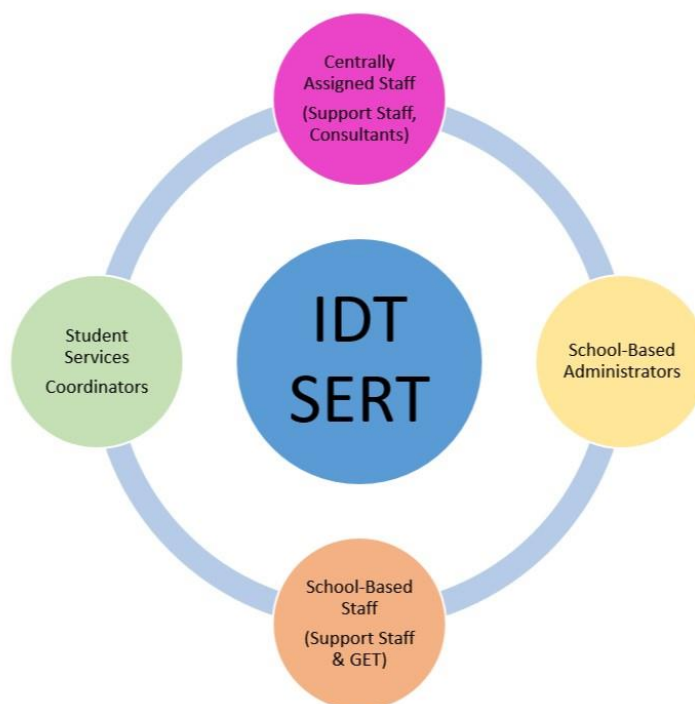
Note. This figure shows the role of the Interdisciplinary Team SERT (IDT) as the middle sphere of influence on those educators and administrators around the circle.

The IDT SERTs middle leader role positioned between centrally assigned staff, school-based administrators, and teaching staff aims to bridge the gap between administration and teachers, utilizing theories of middle leadership to influence professional development and implementation for the benefit of students with FASD.

Indigenous Leadership Lens

Looking at my DiP without considering the impact of an indigenous leadership lens would be unethical. As will be examined in more detail in the coming sections, FASD is a highly

racialized diagnosis whereby the far-reaching impact of the traumas of colonialism and the residential school system continues to negatively impact Indigenous populations, as noted in the Truth and Reconciliation Calls (TRC) to Action. In Stewart and Glowatski's 2018 article *"Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #34: A Framework for Action,"* it is explained that it is crucial to establish connections between the history of residential schools and alcohol consumption. Understanding this link helps to highlight the impact of historical trauma on Indigenous communities, which often includes higher rates of alcohol use and related issues. This context is essential for addressing current challenges and creating effective support systems for individuals affected by FASD within Indigenous communities. One cannot simply ignore this fact. It would also be unethical to continue with the colonial/settler mentality of "doing to" or "doing for" rather than "doing with." Irrespective of their well-meaning intentions, a non-Indigenous middle leader needs to be adequately equipped to intervene with solutions for the educational attainment and success challenges faced by Indigenous students with FASD). As such, the works of Wilson (2003), Johnson & Boyle (2012), Azmat and Masta (2021), and others will continue to underpin my DiP.

Transformative Leadership

As a middle leader, being influenced by an Indigenous leadership lens, including a third lens of transformative leadership, is also fitting. Shields (2012) defines transformative leadership as a "critical approach to leadership grounded in Freire's (2007) fourfold call for critical awareness or conscientization, followed by critical reflection, critical analysis, and finally for activism or critical action against the injustices of which one has become aware" (p. 11). Carrington et al. (2024) further expand on transformative leadership by explaining that it requires a collaborative approach to develop a school culture that is inclusive of all. At its core,

"transformative leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others" (Shields, 2010, p. 559). Transformative leadership is an essential lens through which to view the educational experiences of students with FASD as it takes "into account the material realities, disparities, and unfulfilled promises of the world in which our students" (Shields, 2012, p. 5). At its core, the purpose of a transformative leadership lens is to "both to critique underlying social, cultural, and economic norms, but also to offer promise— to find ways to equalize opportunities and to ensure high-quality education and civil participation for all" (Shields, 2012, p. 19). Carrington et al. (2024) explain that:

> while the starting point for leaders may be shaped by contextual factors, leaders must still address the inequities of power distribution; act to redress marginalisation through democratisation, equity, inclusion, and justice; emphasise interconnectedness and global awareness; and balance critique with promise. All of this requires considerable moral courage. (p. 2)

Ultimately, a middle leader is a change agent who motivates those around them to do something, in this case, to improve the educational experiences of students with FASD. In their Influence without Authority model, Cohen and Bradford (2005; 2017), in Figure 3, outline how one can influence those they have no authority over in the workplace. While I have no official authority in my role as a SERT, I can attempt to influence the practices and belief systems of those whom I work with.

Miller (2019) also stresses the importance of relationships, organizational understanding, and experience when seeking to influence those you have no authority over. Although I have no formal authority in SMDSB, this model of building relationships, credibility, and understanding

other perspectives to persuade and mobilize support effectively is appropriate for my worth to the many groups impacted by my DiP. The model emphasizes the importance of communication, networking, and negotiation skills in navigating organizational dynamics and achieving the desired outcome of improving the educational experience of students with FASD who are attending schools within the SMDSB.

Figure 3

Cohen Bradford – Influence without Authority Model
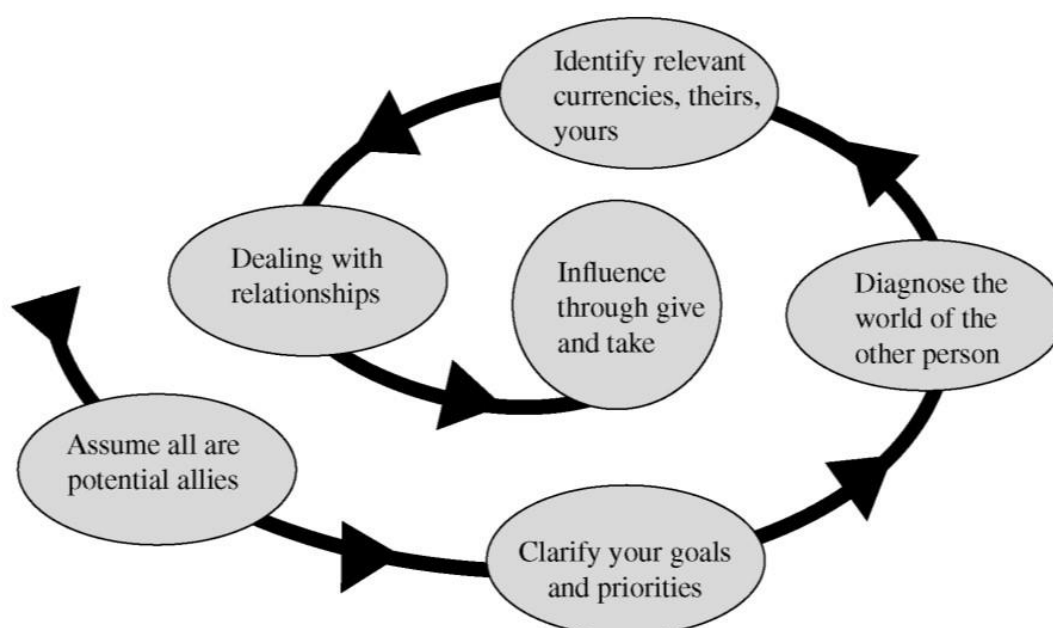
Note. Miller, K. (2019). *How to influence without authority in the workplace.* Harvard Business School Online. https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/influence-without-authority

Personal Leadership Lens and Ways of Knowing

An educator could view FASD as another diagnosis where strengths, needs, and learning strategies can be addressed solely through an Individual Education Plan (IEP). I am not that educator. I am not that leader. I am not that person. To me, behind the diagnosis of FASD is a human, a child who is struggling to navigate an educational system that does not support them, a

system that is not designed with their success in mind. In my experience, "promise, liberation, hope, empowerment, activism, risk, social justice, courage, or revolution do not automatically evoke images of educational leaders in charge of schools and systems, working within the dominant political and bureaucratic frameworks of the 21st century. Yet, all of these concepts are at the heart of transformative leadership" (Shields, 2010, p. 559), the form of leadership I believe can empower those who work with students with FASD.

Central to my beliefs is a strong focus on equity and inclusivity for students with FASD. I advocate for decolonizing and Indigenizing work within education, striving to dismantle colonial structures and practices that perpetuate inequality and marginalization. This involves creating educational environments that honour Indigenous ways of knowing and being while accommodating the unique needs and challenges faced by individuals with FASD. Through this approach, we can cultivate inclusive spaces that empower all students to thrive and succeed, rooted in principles of equity, respect, and Indigenous ways of knowing. The following section will examine the organizational context of the SMDSB and how this context impacts the learning experiences of students with FASD.

Organizational Context

The following section outlines the organizational context in which my DiP is situated, examining the student population and the way in which leadership is structured.

The Students of Silver Maple District School Board

Silver Maple District School Board[3] (SMDSB), a pseudonym is situated in southern Ontario. SMDSB is the source of public education for over 120,000 students, and these students

---

[3] The pseudonym Silver Maple District School Board was chosen out of respect for the Indigenous people who lived on the lands of SMDSB prior to the arrival of White settlers. The Silver Maple and the seasonal gathering of its syrup are ancient practices utilized by the Anishinaabe People for thousands of years. Thank you for allowing me on these lands. I promise to respect and honour them.

attend one of the over 170 elementary or 30 secondary schools (Silver Maple District School Board, 2022). Of the 120,000 SMDSB students, those who participated in a self-identification survey indicated that 28% of students identified as white, 25% as East-Asian, 12% as South-Asian, and 3% as Black (Silver Maple District School Board, 2021). Of note, 2% of students identify as Indigenous. However, other SMDSB documents place the number of self-identified Indigenous students closer to 4% (Silver Maple District School Board, 2021; Silver Maple District School Board, 2022).

The Special Education Structure of Silver Maple District School Board

Over 15,000 SMDSB students have been formally identified as exceptional learners and require an IEP (Silver Maple District School Board, 2022). This equates to one out of every six students requiring some form of Special Education support to navigate their daily educational needs. By utilizing assessment, instruction, and programming, and with the support of a multidisciplinary team comprising teachers, administrators, and Student Services professionals, such as Psychological Services, Speech and Language Pathologists, and Physical and Occupational Therapists, students can be accurately identified and supported. To access specific Special Education support, students can be deemed exceptional through the formal identification of an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) decision (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). Parents and students are heavily supported through this process by SMDSB staff.

Exceptionalities fall under the identification categories of behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical, or multiple exceptionalities (Silver Maple District School Board, 2022; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). Support ranges from general education classroom support

to withdrawal assistance, partially integrated classes, and fully self-contained classrooms (Silver Maple District School Board, 2022). SMDSB does not provide public data on the number of students identified with a specific exceptionality. However, in 2021, SMDSB published survey results in which students were able to self-identify their exceptionalities. Data from all surveyed SMDSB students indicated that just over 5% of students stated they had a Learning Disability, 3% stated that they were gifted, and 2% stated that they had a diagnosis of Autism.

In comparison, 2% indicated a behavioural identification, and 1% stated they had a Language Impairment (Silver Maple District School Board, 2021). Questions asking students to self-identify with specific diagnoses of Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome, or Tourette's were not included in this survey. However, based on the estimated prevalence of FASD at 4% of the population, this would mean that, conservatively, just under 5000 young people within the population of the region live with FASD.

Racial and Indigenous backgrounds, as evidenced through self-identification survey data on racial identity and exceptionally identification, indicate that those students who identified as being Indigenous were twice as likely to be identified as exceptional learners, excluding those in the gifted category. Indigenous students were also almost four times more likely than their peers to be placed in Special Education Classes (excluding Gifted) (Silver Maple District School Board, 2021; Silver Maple District School Board, 2022).

The Organizational Structure of SMDSB

SMDSB is led by the Senior Leadership Team, which consists of the Director, Associate Directors, and multiple superintendents. There are school-based administrators, centrally assigned administrators, and Student Services Coordinators who lead their respective educators and support staff. In the organizational hierarchy, the Student Services Coordinators in each

quadrant supervise an interdisciplinary team of educators, support staff, and para-professionals who bolster and reinforce staff assigned to the schools I am a member of. Figure 4 provides a visual of the organizational structure of SMDSB.

Figure 4

Visual Representation of Silver Maple District School Board
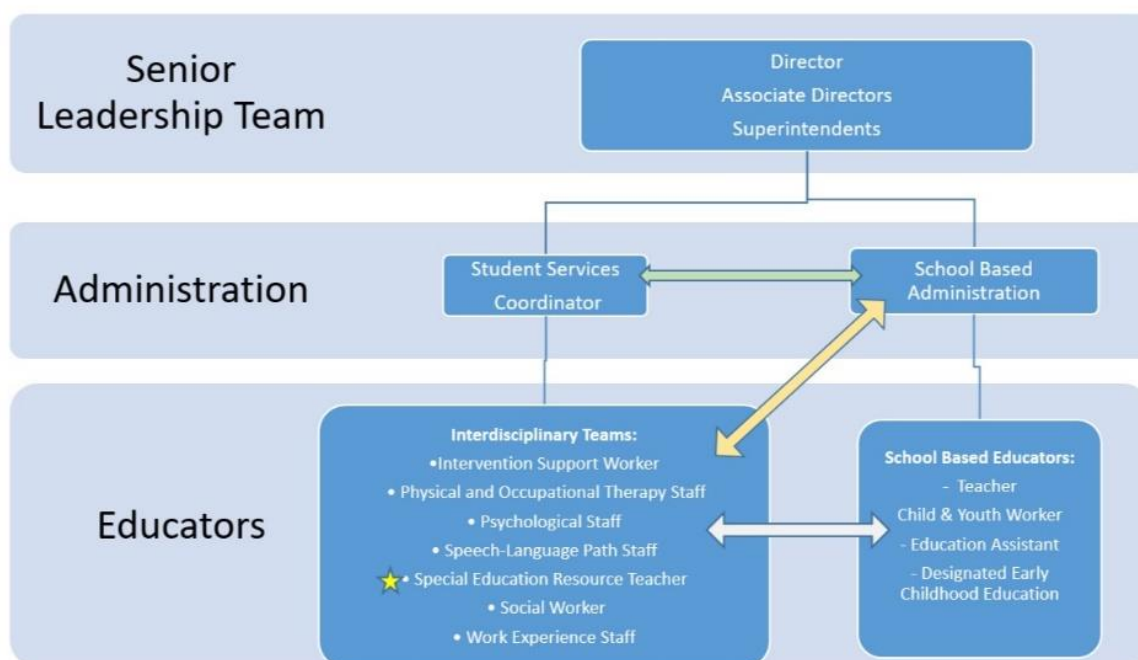
Note. SMDSB's organizational context in a visual representation. The star indicates my role within this context.

There are a number of factors that directly impact SMDSB's organizational context. Politically, the SMDSB has thirteen elected trustees representing the area's constituents in accordance with the Ontario Municipal Elections Act (Silver Maple District School Board, 2022). Under the Ontario Education Act, Trustees set policy for the operations of all publicly

funded schools within the Silver Maple region (Silver Maple District School Board, 2022). Provincially and federally, the region of Silver Maple has been governed by the Conservative party since the early 2000s, which has influenced the policies and procedures set forth by the Board of Trustees. Socially, the over 1.1 million residents of Silver Maple represent very diverse socio-economic demographics. Covering over 650 square km, the region is geographically urban, suburban, and rural, which presents varying student needs depending on their location within the region.

Organizational Leadership Perspective and Approaches

Within SMDSB, there is some evidence of an instructional leadership approach. The Board of Trustees outlines the priorities of the SMDSB in their Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), which is then represented in the goals of the Directors Annual Plan (DAP). The main overarching goal of the DAP is to improve the achievement of those students who are underperforming and underserved (Silver Maple District School Board, 2022). Timperley (2011) explains that an instructional leadership approach in a typically structural functionalist organization strives to promote student learning and well-being, as evidenced in the SMDSB Mission statement, which espouses inclusivity and achievement (Silver Maple District School Board, Website, 2022). SMDSB offers intensive mandatory board-wide professional development in areas of identified need, such as anti-Black racism and mental health and addiction (Silver Maple District School Board, 2022). While these are evident and vital areas of professional development and improvement, from my perspective, the lack of Board-wide acknowledgement, understanding, and professional development regarding FASD is a glaring deficit. This oversight not only perpetuates misunderstanding and stigma but also leaves educators ill-equipped to support students with FASD effectively.

Educational systems are inherently colonial and typically led by settlers who continue to perpetuate issues of inequity for Indigenous students (Louie & Prince, 2023; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). SMDSB has enacted an Indigenous Education and Equity strategy (Silver Maple District School Board, 2022), which is a positive movement towards the elimination of barriers for Indigenous students. However, policy development and proposed strategies do not directly correlate to change or improvement of the learning experience of marginalized and underserved students (Fullan, 2001, 2016).

Leadership Problem of Practice

FASD is recognized as one of the leading causes of developmental disability in the Western world, with an estimated prevalence of 4% (Flannigan et al., 2018; Chudley et al., 2005), equating to potentially 4% of students having an increased probability of living with learning and behavioural problems and the potential for developmental disabilities and speech-language deficits, which often require special education programming (Popova et al., 2016).

As a Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) leading a team of Intervention Support Workers (ISW) for a catchment area of twenty-five schools in SMDSB, we focus on supporting and coaching Administrators, Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs), General Education Teachers (GETs), and support staff who have identified that they require assistance supporting students with highly challenging behavioural needs—many of whom have a diagnosis of FASD. Further, as a generalization, students with FASD do not have the same educational experience as their peers in that they have lower academic achievement and strained relationships with educators and administrators. The poor choices and impulsive behaviours of students with FASD often lead to suspensions from school (Blackburn, 2017; Blagg et al., 2021; Poppova et al., 2015; Riley et al., 201; Spohr et al., 2018)

Students with FASD face higher rates of human trafficking. Evidence indicates that based on the complexity of FASD, including brain and body challenges, environmental hardships, co-occurring conditions, social isolation, and experiences of stigma, the risk of exploitation and trafficking for individuals, especially women and girls, with FASD is increased (Wolfson, Harding & Pepin, 2023). The negative and lacking school experiences of students with FASD correlate to negative and lacking future life outcomes such as an increased likelihood of unemployment, addictions, mental health issues, and incarceration (Rangmar et al., 2015).

Students with FASD typically present with delayed executive functioning skills, unpredictable behaviour, impulsiveness, inattention, memory difficulties, lack of cause-and-effect thinking, and confabulation, to name but a few (Blagg et al., 2021; Riley et al., 2011; Thynne, 2022). However, current educational practices still need to be put in place in SMDSB to support the specific learning needs of this student population. Further, several studies have examined the incidence of FASD in specific geographic locations, specifically among Canada's Indigenous population, and noted a marked increase in FASD diagnoses (Chudley et al., 2005; Flannigan et al., 2018) which led to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015) Calls to Action #33 and #34 addressing and preventing FASD amongst Indigenous populations. The leadership Problem of Practice central to this DiP is how can educators within the SMDSB improve the educational experiences of students with FASD.

Framing the Problem of Practice

Freire (2005) wrote, "Education is an act of love, and thus an act of courage" (p. 33). For many students with FASD, there is a profound need for care and bravery from those supporting them through the educational process, particularly in the context of special education, where educators must navigate unique challenges and tailor their approaches to meet the diverse needs of every student.

FASD and Avery

As with Avery, students with a diagnosis of FASD present with a wide array and spectrum of behavioural, physical, cognitive, and adaptive characteristics, as outlined in Figure 5. These characteristics impact the daily living and educational needs of students in a variety of ways (Brett, Harding & Family Advisory Committee, 2018; Edmonds & Crichton, 2008; Petrenko, Pandolfino & Roddenberry, 2016). Although there are many studies addressing students with FASD, more research is needed from the perspectives of students with FASD and what they feel would be beneficial to improve their learning experiences (Edmonds & Crichton, 2008; Lyall et al., 2023; Wilson et al., 2023). The absence of student voice and agency is a significant issue that I address in my DiP. Elevating student perspectives is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and responsive educational environment. By incorporating student feedback, we can develop strategies that better meet their unique needs and experiences. This approach not only empowers students but also enhances the effectiveness of our educational practices, leading to significantly improved outcomes for all, which should inspire optimism and motivation.

Figure 5

Characteristics of FASD
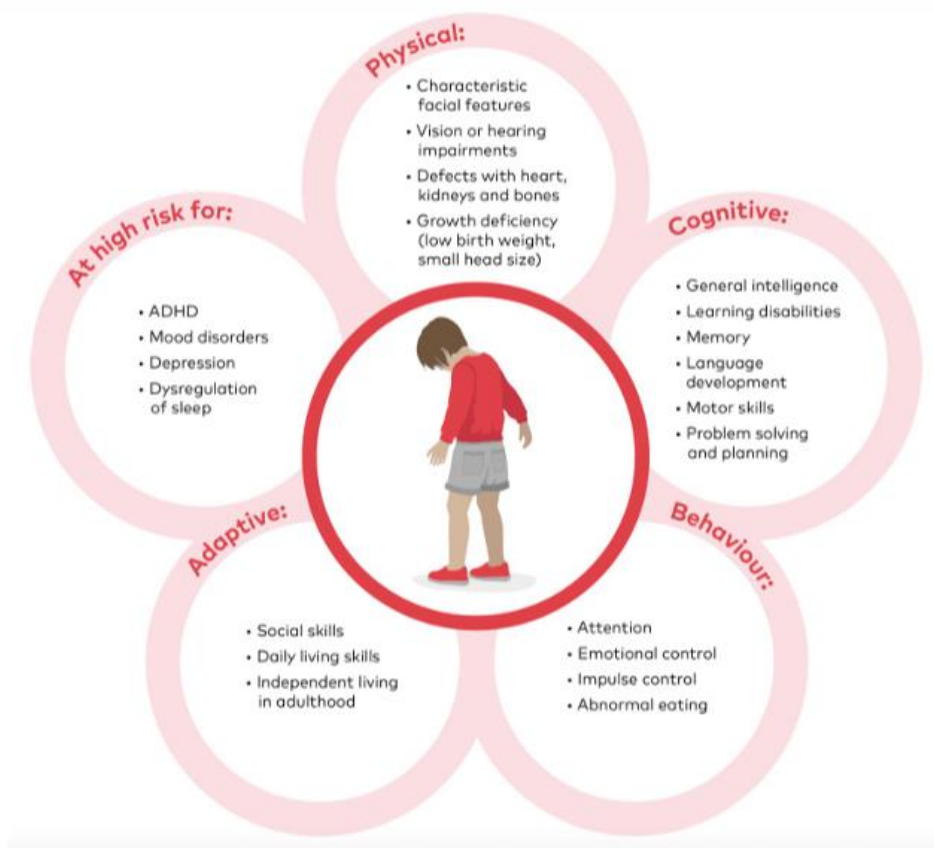
Note. This figure shows some of the physical and behavioural characteristics that an individual with FASD may experience. This figure was created by Frederiksen, N., & Nissinen, N. M. (2022) https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.52746/KDWR1322

While there is limited research on students' specific wants and needs, there is a wealth of information and research on how parents and families of students with FASD can navigate the daily living needs of home and community. Through my DiP, I would like to blend practices recommended by the existing research on parents and families with the practices of educators in a classroom environment. Petrenko, Pandolfino, and Roddenberry (2016) found that:

Caregivers with more excellent knowledge about FASD were more likely to attribute

their child's misbehavior to underlying neurodevelopmental disabilities and were more

likely to use antecedent strategies and feel more confident in managing their child's

behavior. Caregivers who attributed their child's misbehaviour to willful disobedience

were more likely to rely primarily on consequence strategies and feel more ineffective in

their parenting. (p. 260)

These findings, as outlined in Figure 6, have important implications for my DiP and the impact

that a baseline understanding of FASD on the part of all adults involved in a student's life can

have on the outcomes of behaviours and strategies used with students with FASD.

Figure 6

Petrenko, Pandolfino & Roddenberry's Analytic Model
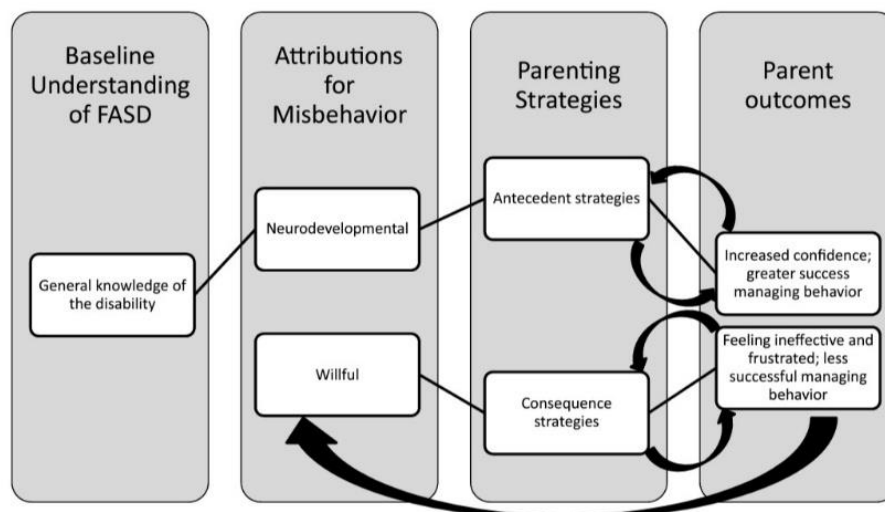
Note. This figure shows the Analytic Model created by Petrenko, Pandolfino, and Roddenberry

(2016). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2016.09.005 The use of this model strives to situate the

behaviours of the individual with FASD in the neurodevelopmental realm rather than in the

deficit lens of willful misbehaviour.

All adults who act as co-regulators, teachers, and advisors for those living with FASD must understand the attributions for misbehaviour on the part of the person with FASD. Behaviours are not a willful choice but rather a result of neurodevelopmental disposition.

Historical Overview

The term Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) was first used in 1973 to describe the shared anomalies of children born to women whose behaviour was characterized as chronically alcoholic (Armstrong, 1998; Brown et al., 2019). Initial articles on FAS were based on eleven case studies; interestingly, there was a heavy focus on Native American women and children. As understanding of FAS was expanded researchers and doctors identified that any alcohol or drug exposure to a fetus in utero had an impact on development, not just those who drink in an alcoholic manner (Armstrong, 1998; Brown et al., 2019).

PESTLE Analysis

Conducting a PESTLE analysis allows for the exploration of how political, economic, social, technological, and environmental external factors impact an organization and how these factors enable a system to make changes (Casañ, 2021; Deszca et al., 2020). Part of the PESTLE analysis in this context would focus on the political and social factors that impact how educators within the SMDSB improve the educational experiences of students with FASD.

Political Factors

Aligned with the importance of ensuring that student voices are heard and respected during the implementation of my DiP, it is vital to ensure that the voices of Indigenous students with FASD and their families are heard. It would be irresponsible and unethical of me as a mother, educator, leader, and scholar not to address the racialization of FASD. Nevertheless, first, I would like to point out the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action,

specifically the 10th, 12th, 33rd, and 34th Calls to Action, which are related to education and

FASD. The Education section of the TRC Call to Action #10 includes the need to provide

funding to close the educational achievement gaps, improve education attainment and success

rates, and develop culturally appropriate curricula. I firmly believe that if we effectively address

the educational Calls to Action, there would be a limited need to have the Justice section,

especially #33 and #34, which state:

33. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to recognize as a

high priority the need to address and prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and to

develop, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, FASD preventive programs that can be

delivered in a culturally appropriate manner.

34. We call upon the governments of Canada, the provinces, and territories to undertake

reforms to the criminal justice system to better address the needs of offenders with Fetal Alcohol

Spectrum Disorder (FASD), including:

> i. Providing increased community resources and powers for courts to ensure
>
> that FASD is properly diagnosed and that appropriate community supports are in
>
> place for those with FASD.

The Calls to Action outlined by the TRC directly correlate to the racialization of FASD.

Prevalence studies have shown an overrepresentation of people with FASD in individual

populations—studies which are wrought with systemic racism and colonial bias. Wolfson et al.,

in their 2019 article "Collaborative Action on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention:

Principles for Enacting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #33," explain

that "Colonial practices including the Indian Act, government and church-run residential schools,

historical and contemporary child welfare practices, and systemic violence against women, have

disrupted families, communities, and traditional approaches to Indigenous peoples' health" (p. 2) which have in turn lead to prenatal exposure to alcohol.

Further, several prevalence studies have examined the incidence of FASD in certain areas and amongst specific populations. For example, Chudley et al. (2005) cite a variety of studies which looked at the prevalence of FASD in several Indigenous communities:

> In an isolated Aboriginal community in British Columbia, FASD prevalence was 190 per 1000 live births. In another Manitoba study in a First Nations community, the prevalence of FAS and partial FAS was estimated to be 55–101 per 1000. In their survey, Asante and Nelms-Matzke estimated the rate of FAS and related effects at 46 per 1000 native Canadian children in the Yukon and 25 per 1000 in northern British Columbia. (p. S1)

Canadian children and youth who identified as Indigenous and lived off reserve had a significantly higher prevalence of FASD than those who did not identify as Indigenous (Palmeter et al., 2021, p. 272). One study found that the pooled prevalence of FASD among Indigenous children and youth living on and off reserve in Canada was 8.7%, compared to 0.5% in the general population (p. 274).

However, Flannigan et al. (2018) stress the importance of noting that the use of "prevalence studies with Indigenous communities, in particular, have produced conflicting results because of continued surveillance, stigmatization, and stereotyping in these populations" (p. 3). As a scholar and an educator, it is my ethical responsibility to take the TRC Calls to Action and the Indigenization of FASD into account in all my work.

Social Factors

The social stigma surrounding FASD is far-reaching. Roozen et al. (2022) define stigmatization as "a social and culturally constituted process whereby a person is first identified as different and then devalued, leading to status loss and discrimination" (p. 754). The social stigma related to FASD can impact a variety of individuals. Most notably, the person with FASD faces stigma related to their diagnosis. The parent of the child with a diagnosis of FASD faces stigma and associated blame for consuming alcohol during pregnancy. The caregivers, guardians, family members, and friends of the individual with FASD face stigma related to the behaviours presented by the individual (Edmonds & Crichton, 2008; Edmonton and Area Fetal Alcohol Network Society, 2023; FASD Ontario, 2022; Roozen et al., 2022). The amount of stigma that the biological mothers of those with FASD receive means that other "biological mothers of children with FASD fear societal judgement and thus conceal having consumed alcohol during pregnancy" (Roozen et al., 2022, p. 754). This stigma and shame may mean that more students are living with FASD than have been officially diagnosed (Roozen et al., 2022).

Guiding Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice

As I navigate my DiP, it is essential that I use these four guiding questions to ensure that my work always serves its intended purpose, improving the educational experience and success rate of students like Avery at SMDSB.

1. How can I initiate the process of challenging the deficit perspective through which Avery and similar students are often perceived?

2. How can I, as the IDT SERT, ensure that the voices of students like Avery are heard and honoured while working with SMDSB educators and administrators to improve the best teaching practices for this population?

3.   How can I, as the IDT SERT, support SMDSB educators and administrators in creating learning environments that are conducive to the success of students like Avery?

4.   How can SMDSB educators and administrators ensure they possess a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous perspectives when supporting Indigenous students with FASD who have exceptional learning needs, along with their families, all while exhibiting a profound grasp of the Calls to Action?

The difficulties encountered by students with FASD in the educational system stem from several critical factors, all of which have influenced this PoP. For instance, a search and examination of the policies and procedures outlined on the SMDSB website (2022) show an overwhelming lack of information and resources specifically related to FASD. This includes resources available to SMDSB staff, and the familial communities served within the school board. This lack of resources contributes to the inadequate education of students with FASD. Further, stigmatization and lack of awareness about FASD, as outlined previously, are contributing factors in the adverse treatment of students with FASD. It has been my experience that educators and leaders within the system equate behaviours not deemed acceptable in school environments as an active choice on the part of the student, viewing students as saying "I won't" versus "I can't."

Stigmatization of FASD impacts not only the individual with this diagnosis but also the families, particularly the birth mothers. For example, birth mothers are also impacted by self-stigma. Self-stigma emerges when individuals bearing a stigmatized designation internalize adverse stereotypes, leading to detrimental effects on their self-esteem and belief in their capabilities (Corrigan et al., 2017). Further, Corrigan et al. (2017) address the issue of

stigmatization of birth mothers by explaining, "difference leads to disdain; notions that labeled people who are distinct from the average member of the general population are less valued and more disrespected. Difference and disdain are exacerbated by ideas of responsibility; that is, the labeled individual is to blame for the stigmatized condition" (p. 1167). I have had the opportunity to work with families of students with FASD. It has been my experience that there is much shame surrounding the diagnosis. In discussions with these families, they note that they have experienced negative experiences with schools, especially around the reasons for the diagnosis as well as the choice of language used to describe the student and the student's behaviour.

My experiences as a SERT have led to years of personal observation, which can be categorized as naturalistic observation. Naturalistic observations occur when people's behaviour is observed in their natural environments. In contrast, disguised naturalistic observations occur ethically when the observer does not make those around them aware that they are being observed (Jhangiani et al., 2019). Throughout my career, I have taken in, observed, and recorded the comments made by my educators, leaders, community members, families, peers, and so on regarding students with FASD. With these observations and awareness, I can speak to the phenomena of marginalization, inequity, and otherness experienced by students with FASD.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

Authors Deszca, Ingols, and Cawsey, in their book *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit* (2020), write, in reference to change, "The truth is - the cavalry is not coming!" There will be no cavalry charging over the hill to save us. It is up to us to make the changes needed" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 5). Avery and students with FASD need change; the educators supporting them must make the necessary changes within the system to provide a better

education that meets their specific needs. Increased understanding and awareness, changes to program delivery and implementation, improvement of best practices, and consistent and diligent monitoring and evaluation will lead to better educational, well-being, and life outcomes for all students diagnosed with FASD. At the core of my DiP is the message, "Whatever you do, make a difference with it" (Zohar, 2005, p. 48), a message that is profoundly needed when advocating for change in the education of students with FASD, like Avery, within the SMDSB.

Vision for Change

My vision for change can be summed up in one sentence: "The shift is from seeing a child as one who won't do something to one who possibly can't" (Healthy Child Manitoba & Manitoba Education and Training, 2018, p. 51). This vision for change requires a reframing of how educators view students with FASD. For example, imagine a student with FASD who is experiencing difficulty with asking for permission to do something. Many educators tend to assume that a student is interrupting or demonstrating negative behaviour. However, as educators, we need to understand that this task requires the ability to generalize instructions, interpret cause and effect, and predict an outcome, skills students with FASD might not possess. Rather than disciplining the student for their choices or making assumptions about the behaviour, educators should provide supportive suggestions and strategies such as checking in with the student frequently to avoid behaviour challenges and providing the student with a visual cue that shows that the student requires assistance.

Present State of Organizational Context

As mentioned above, both the MYSP and DAP demonstrate the Silver Maple District School Board's commitment to improving the achievements of underperforming and underserved students. SMDSB quotes the Ontario Ministry of Education (2013) document *Learning for All: A*

Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12, stating that "assistance targeted at a specific group can help everyone." The SMDSB has developed strategic plans specifically related to learning disabilities, student mental health and addiction, Indigenous Education, equity, anti-bullying, and anti-Black racism, to name but a few. However, despite FASD having a higher prevalence than any other disability and given that it affects all races and directly impacts students' mental health, there is no mention of FASD in any of these district plans.

Priorities for Change

For individuals with FASD, "primary challenges are those that a child was born with and are a result of prenatal alcohol exposure. They reflect differences in brain structure and function" (Healthy Child Manitoba & Manitoba Education and Training, 2018, p. 51). Primary challenges are outside the locus of control for educators. On the other hand, individuals with FASD also experience secondary challenges; these can occur "over time when there is a mismatch between the person and his or her environment" (p. 51). It is important to note that current research demonstrates that some secondary challenges, particularly those related to mental health, may indeed be categorized as primary challenges of FASD (Healthy Child Manitoba & Manitoba Education and Training, 2018). Secondary challenges can include but are not limited to "fatigue, frustration, anxiety, fearfulness, rigid, resistant, argumentative behaviour, becoming overwhelmed, shut down (withdrawn), a poor self-concept, feelings of failure, and low self-esteem, isolation, acting out, aggression, school disruption, justice involvement, addictions, difficulty finding and maintaining employment [and] homelessness" (p. 51).

If a student with FASD is given the necessary support while in school, there is the possibility of reducing some of the secondary challenges these individuals may face while in the

community and at home. Providing students with FASD with a learning environment in which they can develop the skills needed to function and thrive in their current situations and the future needs to be the priority for change.

Macro, Meso and Micro Leadership

At the macro-level, the SMDSB controls the creation of organizational policies. Further, SMDSB is responsible for setting the institutional direction and culture for academic integrity. This includes having articulated policies and procedures that can be applied fairly and equitably throughout the school board. Leaders at this level can also act as champions who set the tone for the entire organization. The decisions of these leaders directly impact students with FASD (Eaton, 2020; Potter, 2023). At the macro level, I need to consider the direction and leadership of Superintendents, Associate Directors, and Directors.

Meso-level leadership involves assigning curriculum delivery to qualified instructors and allocating space, time, and budget for resources. Additionally, at the meso level, the principal oversees the quality of instruction and assessment. School administrators can help teachers access professional development opportunities during school hours. The allocation of resources by administrators, such as class scheduling, can be used to support teachers' professional learning. Additionally, administrators can communicate the importance of developing and fostering a greater understanding and knowledge of best practices for students with FASD (Eaton, 2020; Potter, 2023). At the meso level, I will be considering the leadership of administrators, both school-based and centrally assigned. I will also be looking to the leadership of consultants and para-professionals.

At the micro-level, classroom practices fall under the autonomy of individual teachers. Further, professional development opportunities, specific teaching situations, available human

and material resources, educational improvement initiatives, and school-imposed directives shape teachers' learning. Micro-level educational development focuses on enhancing individual teaching expertise. This includes professional development and teacher support groups (Eaton, 2020; Potter, 2023). At the micro level, I will consider the roles of school-based staff, such as teachers and support staff.

Chapter 1 Conclusion

The PoP's core question of how educators can improve the educational experiences of students with FASD requires a simple solution within a complex system.

> Beliefs dictate behaviours. The belief that many primary learning and behavioural characteristics associated with [FASD] are the result of willful, volitional, or intentional behaviours often leads to punishment of these symptoms. The key…is linking the idea of brain functions with presenting behaviours, reframing perceptions, and moving from punishment to support. (Healthy Child Manitoba & Manitoba Education and Training, 2018, p. 50)

When educators understand that their students' FASD behaviours result from neurodiversity, that will be the first step to developing a supportive and effective learning environment for this student population.

Chapter 1 provided a window into the world of students like Avery who live with FASD and whose educational experiences are impacted by educators' understanding of FASD. I examined my role and responsibilities within the SMDSB and described how, as a middle leader, I can support improving the educational experience of students with FASD. An Indigenous leadership lens and a transformative leadership approach form the basis of how I intend to

dismantle this issue. The organizational context of the SMDSB and my agency within this organization were also examined.

Chapter 2 will address possible solutions and ways educators can reframe their perceptions about the behaviours of students living with FASD.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

I am in a unique position as a middle leader. Middle leadership is the layer of leaders between senior management and classroom practitioners (Flemming, 2019). Chapter 2 will explore my leadership approach through the approach of a middle leadership lens. I will then examine Kotter's 8-Step Change Model (K8SCM) for leading the change process within my organization. Next, I will examine the organizational change readiness of the SMDSB, followed by the leadership ethics, considerations, and challenges as they apply to the change process. Finally, I will discuss the possible solutions to my PoP.

Leadership Approaches to Change

Middle leadership differs from principal leadership or administration in that the leadership role may be formal or informal. It can involve those in classroom teaching positions and other teaching roles. However, middle leaders are often responsible for leading school teams in specific contexts, such as curriculum leads, consultants or project leads. Middle leadership occupies the space between the formal leadership roles and the other staff within a building, allowing middle leaders to aid in staff development and improvement (De Nobile, 2021; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2019; Grice, 2019; Lipscombe et al., 2020; Tang, Bryant & Walker, 2022). Middle leadership frameworks align perfectly with my role. It is through this leadership lens that I intend to "be the kind of person that people would follow voluntarily, even if you had no title or position" (Tracy, 1997, p. 18).

Middle leadership is the influence an educator has on those who can aid in the overall improvement of student learning and well-being (De Nobile, 2021; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2019; Grice, 2019; Lipscombe et al., 2020; Tang, Bryant & Walker, 2022). Grootenboer, Edwards-Groves and Ronnerman (2019) explain that middle-leading work is a "social practice" (p. 253)

whereby the relationships that middle leaders form with colleagues influence the ability to create and sustain meaningful change. Middle leaders play a critical role in the professional learning of educators in a school as they "exercise their leading in and around the teaching that happens in classrooms" (Edwards-Groves, Grootenboer & Ronnerman, 2016, p. 372). Hung et al. (2017) focus on middle leadership, referring to teachers or teacher leaders who lead from within the middle of the organizational hierarchy in a "middle-out" approach. Their goal is to foster curriculum innovation with the aim of inducing a fundamental shift in teachers' understanding and knowledge. Edwards-Groves, Grootenboer and Ronnerman (2016) highlight that while teachers working directly in classrooms have the greatest impact on student learning among educational variables, the influence of principals' practices on student learning is notably constrained and indirect.

Those in middle leading positions are able to implement high-yield strategies and practices, which are essential for managing and supporting school-based programs and initiatives (Grootenboer, Edwards-Groves & Ronnerman, 2019). Hargreaves and Shirley (2019) stress the importance of the middle leader by noting that:

> The middle can play an invaluable role by helping to implement changes from the top and moving around ideas and strategies that are percolating up from beneath. The middle, here, is a connector. It improves efficiency and performance by breaking down the walls of miscommunication and misunderstanding that can flourish in large organizations like school systems. The middle moves things up, down and around (p. 112).

Tang, Bryant, and Walker's (2022) instruction-oriented middle leadership model emphasizes the pivotal role of middle leaders in driving instructional improvement and fostering a culture of learning within schools. This model positions middle leaders as critical agents in

promoting effective teaching practices, curriculum innovation, and professional development. Central to this approach is the idea that middle leaders, by virtue of their proximity to both classroom teachers and senior management, are uniquely placed to influence and implement instructional strategies that directly affect student learning. They act as instructional coaches, guiding teachers in refining their pedagogical methods, integrating new technologies, and adopting evidence-based practices.

Further, the model advocates for a collaborative approach, promoting teamwork and shared responsibility, where middle leaders work closely with teachers to co-create learning environments that are responsive to the diverse needs of students. Additionally, it highlights the importance of continuous professional learning, encouraging middle leaders to facilitate ongoing training sessions, workshops, and peer observations to foster a culture of reflective practice. By focusing on instruction and learning, Tang, Bryant, and Walker's (2022) model underscores the transformative potential of middle leadership in enhancing educational outcomes and ensuring that all students, including those with unique needs, such as FASD, receive high-quality education tailored to their needs.

Figure 7 highlights my use of Tang, Bryant, and Walker's (2022) instruction-oriented middle leadership model to pinpoint the ways in which my role as a middle leader can affect and improve the education experience for students within the SMDSB who live with FASD.

Figure 7

My Instruction-Oriented Middle Leadership
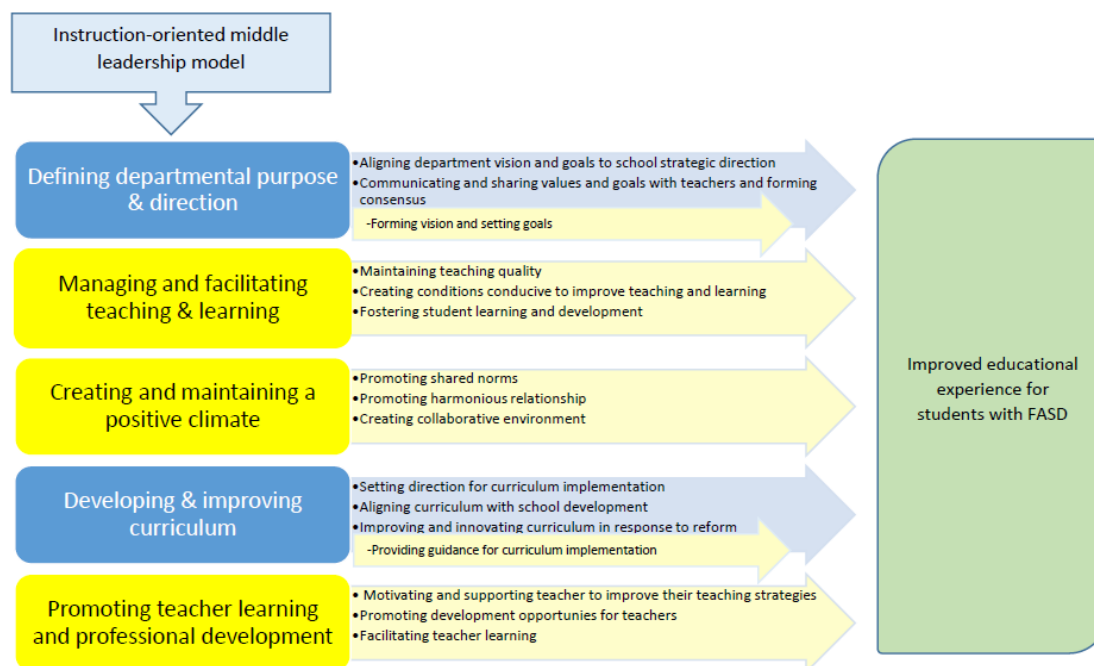
Note. This figure is adapted from Tang, Bryant and Walker (2022), page 519. Shapes coloured yellow on this figure indicate areas in which I, as a middle leader, have agency.

Figure 8 provides a visual representation of Hargreaves and Shirley's (2019) recognition of the cyclical nature of leadership and the role of the middle leader. While their work typically applies to school principals who are in the middle between students, the district, and the education ministry, this graphic, which highlights the connecting role, is very applicable to my work as an IDT SERT on the Student Services Team.

Figure 8

Leading from the Middle

Note. This graphic, created by Hargreaves and Shirley (2019, p. 98), illustrates the ways in which one can lead from the middle. https://doi.org/10.1108/jpcc-06-2019-0013

Hargreaves and Shirley (2019) delved deeply into the dynamics of middle leadership within educational systems, exploring how these leaders function as critical connectors within the broader organizational structure. They describe middle leaders as occupying a unique position that allows them to facilitate the flow of ideas, strategies, and information both vertically and horizontally within the school hierarchy. This intermediary role enables middle leaders to interpret and implement top-down policies from district or ministry levels while also advocating for the needs and feedback of students and teachers. Their framework emphasizes the importance of middle leaders in building coherence and alignment across different levels of the

educational system. By acting as a bridge, middle leaders help translate strategic visions into practical, actionable steps at the classroom level, ensuring that initiatives are not only understood but also effectively executed. Hargreaves and Shirley further highlight the unchanging nature of this role, where continuous feedback loops enable middle leaders to adjust and refine practices based on real-time insights and outcomes. This cyclical process of leadership ensures that policies remain responsive and adaptive to the evolving needs of the educational community. Additionally, they underscore the significance of relational trust and professional collaboration, positing that successful middle leadership hinges on the ability to cultivate substantial, trusting relationships with both senior leaders and frontline educators. Through their nuanced exploration of these dynamics, Hargreaves and Shirley provide a comprehensive understanding of how middle leaders can drive sustainable improvement and innovation within schools, ultimately enhancing educational experiences and outcomes for all students, and specifically related to the PoP, students with FASD.

Further, middle leadership interconnects with social justice through its ability to influence and implement equitable practices within educational settings. Paulo Freire emphasized the importance of education as a practice of freedom, asserting that:

> it either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Freire, 1970, p. 34).

 Middle leaders, by virtue of their proximity to both classroom educators and administrators, are uniquely positioned to advocate for and enact policies that promote

inclusivity and equity. They play a crucial role in identifying and addressing systemic inequalities that affect marginalized student populations, including those with FASD. Middle leaders can lead professional development that raises awareness about social justice issues, equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge to create more inclusive classrooms for all students, specifically those related to the problem of the practice of students with FASD.

Freire's belief that "to speak a true word is to transform the world" (1970, p. 88) resonates with the work of middle leaders who strive to foster dialogue and critical thinking among educators and students alike, and in relation to the PoP, issues facing those with FASD. They can also facilitate the development and implementation of curricula that reflect diverse perspectives and histories, ensuring that all students see themselves represented in their education. By fostering a school culture that values equity and inclusivity, middle leaders help to dismantle barriers to student success and create a learning environment where all students have the opportunity to thrive. Through their work, middle leaders embody the principles of social justice leadership, striving to create a more just and equitable educational landscape, much in line with Freire's vision of education as a means for liberation and transformation. As middle leaders champion these values, they lay the groundwork for transformative change within the school system. To effectively lead such transformative efforts, it is essential to develop a robust framework for driving change and innovation within educational settings, which will be discussed in the following section.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

Leading the change process within an organization, such as the SMDSB, requires a nuanced approach that blends structured strategies with interpersonal skills. Kotter's (2012) 8-step change model provides a comprehensive framework for managing large-scale, strategic

change initiatives by creating a sense of urgency, building a guiding coalition, and sustaining

momentum through clearly defined steps. However, in environments where formal authority is

limited or hierarchical structures are rigid, the influence without authority (IWA) model by

Cohen and Bradford (2017) offers a complementary approach. This model emphasizes building

relationships, credibility, and reciprocity to exert influence effectively. Recognizing the

complexity of the task, a combined approach that integrates Kotter's (2012) methodical process

with the relational undercurrents of the IWA Model is necessary. This blended approach allows

leaders to navigate complex organizational landscapes, secure broad-based support, and

implement sustainable change. It ensures that change can be driven both from the top-down and

bottom-up, leveraging formal structures and informal networks to achieve enduring success.

Influence without Authority Model

As a middle leader, leading change can pose a unique set of challenges related to limited

authority. The IWA model (Cohen & Bradford, 2017), as outlined above in Figure 3, presents a

framework for individuals to exert influence in situations where they lack formal authority. It

encourages individuals to understand the perspectives and needs of others, communicate

persuasively, and negotiate win-win solutions. Central to this approach is the concept of

"exchange currency," where individuals leverage their expertise, resources, or networks to gain

support and achieve desired outcomes. By focusing on building trust and collaborative

partnerships, the IWA model empowers individuals to navigate complex organizational

dynamics and achieve success through influence rather than formal authority.

The IWA model offers significant benefits for leaders operating in environments where

formal authority is limited. In the IWA model, building solid relationships is crucial for effective

leadership and collaboration. Strategies to achieve this include active listening, where leaders

genuinely seek to understand the perspectives and needs of others, and reciprocity, where mutual support and benefit are emphasized. Another critical strategy is demonstrating reliability and competence, which builds trust and respect. As the IDT SERT, I could accomplish this by consistently engaging with colleagues, offering valuable insights and support, and showing dedication to shared goals. By fostering an environment of collaboration and mutual respect, as the IDT SERT, I can effectively influence positive outcomes without relying on formal authority. By understanding the perspectives and needs of others, leaders can communicate persuasively and negotiate mutually beneficial solutions, fostering a collaborative atmosphere. Such a strategy not only enhances trust and cooperation but also empowers individuals to navigate complex organizational dynamics and drive change without relying on positional power. Ultimately, the IWA model promotes a more inclusive and participatory form of leadership, which can lead to more sustainable and widely accepted outcomes within an organization.

Limitations to the Influence without Authority Model

While the IWA model offers a valuable framework for exerting influence in the absence of formal power, it has its limitations. One significant drawback is that it can take time to build the necessary relationships and credibility required to exert influence effectively. This process involves significant investment in understanding the perspectives and needs of others, which can delay decision-making and action (Cohen & Bradford, 2005). Additionally, the reliance on personal relationships can lead to consistency in influence, as success heavily depends on the individual's social skills and network. This variability can undermine the predictability and reliability of influence efforts, making it challenging to achieve consistent outcomes (Yukl, 2013).

Another limitation of the IWA model is its potential to be less effective in highly hierarchical or rigid organizational cultures. In such environments, the emphasis on formal authority and established protocols can overshadow informal influence tactics, reducing their impact (Gilley, Dixon, & Gilley, 2008). Furthermore, the model's focus on reciprocity and exchange may inadvertently lead to favouritism or perceptions of inequity, where only those with desirable resources or networks can effectively influence others. This can create a sense of exclusion or resentment among those who feel they lack the necessary "exchange currency," potentially leading to decreased morale and engagement (Bolman & Deal, 2017). These limitations suggest that while the IWA model can be powerful, it must be used thoughtfully and supplemented with other approaches to address its inherent challenges.

Kotter's 8 Step-Model

In order to facilitate the changes required to benefit students with FASD, I have proposed also utilizing Kotter's 8-Step Change Model (K8SCM). McPheat (2023) outlines these steps in Figure 9. The steps in K8SCM are first to create a sense of urgency, then build a guiding coalition, following form a strategic vision, then enlist a volunteer army, next enable action by removing barriers, generate short-term wins, sustain acceleration, and finally institute change (CioPages, 2023; Hicks, 2022; Kotter International Inc., 2022; McPheat, 2023).

The first step of the K8SCM has occurred organically in my professional practice within the SMBDSB in that there is already a sense of urgency to improve the educational experience of students with FASD. This urgency is further evidenced in the TRC Calls to Action and the experiences and observations of those who support these students. The urgency is there because the best practices are not. Educators and administrators need help with how to deal with the learning and behavioural needs of students with FASD. The urgency exists, and we must act

now.

Figure 9

Kotter's 8 Step-Model
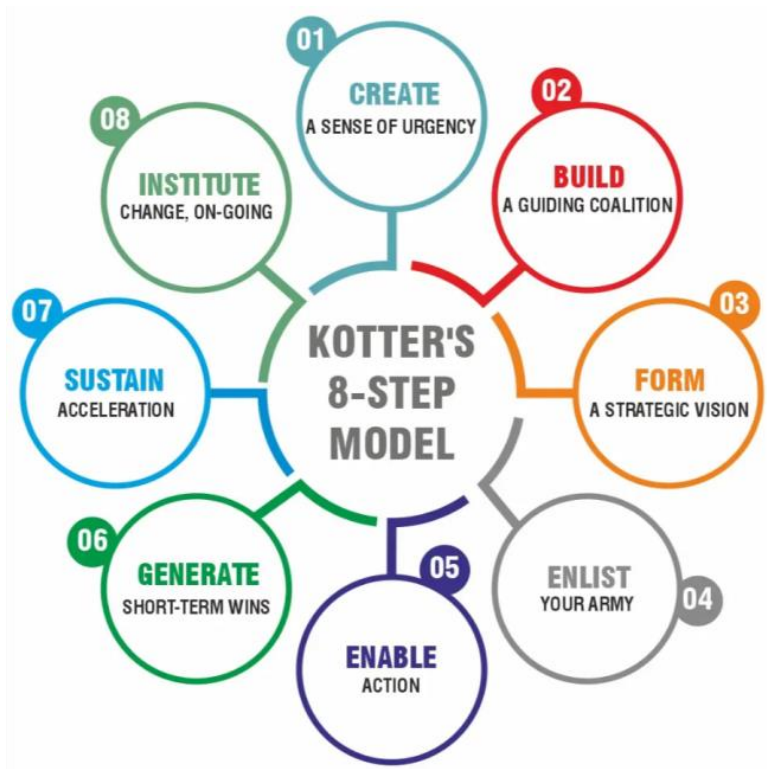
Note. This figure illustrates the 8 steps outlined in Kotter's model (CioPages, 2023).

Building a guiding coalition has also begun to occur organically in that educators, administrators, outside agencies, and community partners have begun to come together, out of necessity, to work towards the common goal of improving the education of students with FASD. This collaborative effort is vital to our success. McPheat (2023) recommends that in this step, those in the organization who hold positions of influence and power be included to ensure the coalition's success. I will include meetings with those in senior management positions as they have a level of authority and agency that, as a teacher, I need to have. Those in senior management have access to funds that would allow for the release time of educators and leaders,

which would increase access to professional development opportunities. The senior management team is also responsible for setting the board-wide mandated professional development for all schools. Upon seeing the value of professional development targeted at the improved understanding of FASD, regional special education administrators could be in a position to mandate such training.

Forming a strategic vision is the third step of the K8SCM. The writing of my DiP will act as the strategic vision of my change plan. The observational data, educators' ancestral experiences, and the examination of existing research meld together to paint a picture of the current situation and the future vision for students with FASD.

Enlisting a volunteer army, the fourth step of the K8SCM can occur through the open communication of this DiP with educators, administrators, and senior management. It is no secret that many students with FASD struggle with behavioural challenges. All those involved in the education of these students observe this daily. Provided with information, strategies and support, these team members can come together as a volunteer army to improve students' educational experiences with FASD. Understanding the politics of this work is crucial for influencing decision-makers and effectively illuminating the issues at hand. To effectively enlist people into "the army" of change, it is essential to identify and empower individuals who are passionate about the cause and can advocate for it within their circles of influence. These change champions can help bridge the gap between the leadership's vision and the broader staff, facilitating smoother implementation of new initiatives. Demonstrating an understanding of internal politics involves recognizing the key groups, understanding their priorities, and strategically aligning the goals of the initiative with their interests.

Furthermore, influencing decision-makers requires a clear and compelling presentation of the issues, backed by data and real-world examples that highlight the urgency and potential impact of the proposed changes. Building relationships through transparency, consistent communication, and displaying early wins can also help in gaining the support of key influencers within the organization. By strategically leveraging the influence of change champions and understanding the political landscape, we can more effectively advocate for necessary changes and ensure that initiatives, such as improving support for students with FASD, gain the traction and commitment needed for successful implementation.

The fifth step, enabling action by removing barriers, stands as a critical component for achieving success and embodies the core principles of this DiP. Kotter stresses the importance of this step, especially in identifying how barriers may affect the work educators are attempting to do (McPheat, 2023; Kotter International Inc., 2022). The purpose of this step while leading change is to ensure that the obstacles to future steps are removed and to solidify the steps that have already been taken. It is crucial that we have a clear path to success, and that means removing any barriers that stand in our way.

Mitigating the issues associated with implementing change within a school board involves strategic lobbying, fostering meaningful conversations, and engaging influential vital groups. Key strategies include identifying and lobbying the right people, such as board members, administrators, and community leaders, by aligning your message with their priorities and providing compelling data and personal stories that highlight the need for specialized support for students with FASD. Inviting influential people to conversations through meetings, workshops, and forums ensures these discussions are inclusive and solution-focused, emphasizing the benefits for all students. Building alliances and coalitions with other organizations and advocacy

groups can amplify your voice and share resources and best practices. Highlighting early wins and positive outcomes from pilot programs can build momentum and support for more significant changes. Maintaining continuous engagement and transparent communication with critical groups helps to sustain support and build trust over time. By employing these strategies, you can effectively navigate the political landscape, garner necessary support, and drive meaningful change within the school board to better support students with FASD.

Generating short-term wins is the sixth step in Kotter's Model. Short-term wins help all those involved stay positive and maintain the momentum needed to continue with initiatives to support students with FASD. My PoP is done through small and measurable goals tied to the strategic vision, which occurs over a shorter timeframe (McPheat, 2023; Kotter International Inc., 2022). This step is also valuable for restoring any doubts that naysayers might be displaying about the activities set out to support students.

Sustaining acceleration is the seventh step of the K8SCM. Communication and the continued maintenance of progress from the first six steps are crucial to maintaining the acceleration of change. To ensure that initiatives for supporting students with FASD become a permanent part of SMDSB, it is essential to integrate these strategies into the district's core policies and curriculum. Establishing a dedicated task force to oversee and advocate for these initiatives will help maintain focus and accountability. Mandatory and ongoing professional development for educators and administrators will ensure that they are well-equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. Building strong alliances with FASD organizations and engaging the community will provide additional support and resources. Regular monitoring, data collection, and feedback mechanisms will help evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives and allow for continuous improvement. Publicizing successes and creating recognition programs for

exemplary implementation will foster a culture of excellence and commitment within the district.

The final step of the K8SCM is to institutionalize the changes made. Arriving at this step would mean that the culture of SMDSB has evolved so that educators and administrators have recognized the specific learning needs of students with FASD and the best practices required to ensure that these students receive the educational experience needed to succeed in life after their elementary and secondary schooling careers have ended.

Limitations of the K8SCM

Kotter's 8-Step Change Model, while widely recognized for its structured approach to organizational change, has several limitations. One major critique is its linear, sequential nature, which can be overly rigid and fail to accommodate the dynamic and iterative processes often required in real-world change scenarios (Appelbaum et al., 2012). This model assumes a top-down management style, potentially overlooking the value of bottom-up initiatives and the importance of grassroots support in fostering lasting change (Pollack & Pollack, 2014).

Additionally, Kotter's model is criticized for its focus on short-term wins, which may lead to superficial changes rather than addressing deeper, systemic issues within a school or educational institution. In an educational setting, this approach might result in temporary improvements in student performance or engagement without tackling underlying problems such as outdated teaching methods, inadequate resources, or systemic inequities. For lasting impact, it is crucial to focus not only on quick successes but also on creating sustainable, long-term solutions that address the root causes of challenges faced by the school community. (Hughes, 2011).

Furthermore, the model does not adequately consider the emotional and psychological impacts of change on employees, which are crucial for sustaining long-term commitment and

engagement (Burnes, 2004). These limitations suggest that while Kotter's model provides a valuable framework, it should be adapted and supplemented with other approaches to manage complex organizational changes effectively. Specifically, Kotter's emphasis on short-term wins might not fully address the deep-seated challenges associated with FASD, such as the need for ongoing professional development, comprehensive policy changes, and the integration of inclusive teaching practices.

Kotter's framework, when applied to improving the educational experience of students with FASD, aligns with the structured approach needed for systemic change in the educational context. The initial step of creating a sense of urgency naturally aligns with the already existing recognition of the pressing need to enhance support for students with FASD. This sense of urgency is not only driven by educators and administrators who witness the daily challenges faced by these students but also by broader mandates such as the TRC Calls to Action. Building a guiding coalition, the second step is evident through the collaborative efforts of educators, administrators, community partners, and external agencies working together to address these challenges. By including influential key groups from senior management, this coalition can leverage authority and resources to drive significant changes, such as funding for professional development and mandating FASD-specific training.

As we move through Kotter's model, the formulation of a strategic vision through the DiP serves as a roadmap for change, providing a clear and compelling direction. Enlisting a volunteer army is crucial, and by openly sharing the strategic vision and involving educators and administrators, a robust support network can be formed.

In the SMDSB, the volunteer army refers to critical groups that play vital roles in driving and sustaining change. This group includes teachers, who are essential in adopting and

integrating new practices within the classroom, and school administrators, such as principals and vice-principals, who set the direction for the school and ensure teachers have the necessary support and resources. Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) provide targeted support and expertise for students with specific needs like FASD. In contrast, support staff, including counsellors and psychologists, offer critical services that support students' well-being and academic success. Engaged parents and guardians reinforce educational strategies at home and advocate for their children's needs, making their involvement essential for a consistent learning environment. Students themselves, as primary beneficiaries, provide feedback and participation crucial for tailoring strategies to their needs. Finally, community partners offer additional resources and real-world learning opportunities, bridging the gap between the school and the broader community. This volunteer army collaborates to create a more inclusive, supportive, and effective educational environment.

The fifth step, enabling action by removing barriers, is central to overcoming obstacles that hinder progress. This involves addressing systemic issues, such as the need for specialized training and resources that prevent educators from effectively supporting students with FASD. Generating short-term wins through measurable goals helps to maintain momentum and demonstrate the impact of initiatives, reinforcing commitment among critical groups. Sustaining acceleration ensures that these efforts are maintained over time, embedding the changes into the fabric of the SMDSB. Finally, institutionalizing the changes ensures that the improved practices become a permanent part of the educational culture, ensuring long-term support and success for students with FASD.

Despite criticisms of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model for its top-down approach, a middle leader can effectively use this framework to drive meaningful change within their organization.

Middle leaders often operate in a position where they must bridge the gap between senior management and frontline staff, making Kotter's model an ideal tool for navigating this dynamic (Appelbaum et al., 2012). By leveraging the structured steps of Kotter's model, a middle leader can create a sense of urgency and build a guiding coalition that includes influential key groups from both levels, thereby ensuring broader buy-in and support (Pollack & Pollack, 2015). This inclusive approach helps to align the organization's vision with the practical realities faced by educators and staff, fostering a sense of shared purpose and commitment (Hughes, 2011). Additionally, the middle leader can focus on enabling action by removing barriers and generating short-term wins, which are crucial for building momentum and demonstrating the tangible benefits of the change initiatives (Burnes, 2004). By fostering collaboration and communication, a middle leader can adapt Kotter's model to ensure it supports a more bottom-up engagement, thereby addressing the model's limitations while harnessing its strengths to improve the educational experience of students with FASD (Cameron & Green, 2024).

Combining Models

Combining the IWA model by Cohen and Bradford with Kotter's 8-Step Change Model reveals complementary strengths in driving organizational change. Kotter's model provides a structured, top-down approach with clearly defined steps, such as creating urgency and building a coalition, which is particularly effective for large-scale, strategic initiatives (Kotter, 1996). However, it can be rigid and overly reliant on formal authority (Appelbaum et al., 2012). In contrast, the IWA model focuses on leveraging relationships, credibility, and reciprocity to influence others without relying on hierarchical power. It is ideal for middle leaders and those in positions with limited formal authority (Cohen & Bradford, 2005). The IWA model fosters grassroots support and collaboration by encouraging leaders to build trust and credibility with

their teams, thereby creating a more inclusive and participative change process. While Kotter's model excels in creating an apparent plan change, Cohen and Bradford's model allows for fostering grassroots support and collaboration (Pollack & Pollack, 2015).

Integrating Kotter's structured steps with Cohen and Bradford's relational approach can create a more holistic and effective change management strategy. For instance, Kotter's initial steps of creating urgency and building a guiding coalition can be enhanced by using the IWA model to build relationships and trust, thereby securing commitment from key groups at all levels. Middle leaders can leverage the principles of reciprocity and credibility by, for example, offering their expertise or support in return for the influential individuals' backing. This creates a robust guiding coalition that is invested in the change process. This combination allows for a strategic vision that is not only top-down but also enriched by the insights and cooperation of grassroots members.

Furthermore, the later stages of Kotter's model, such as enabling action by removing barriers and generating short-term wins, can be bolstered by the influence tactics of Cohen and Bradford. By understanding and addressing the needs and concerns of those affected by the change, middle leaders can facilitate smoother transitions and sustain momentum. The reciprocity inherent in the IWA model ensures that the benefits of short-term wins are recognized and appreciated across the organization, reinforcing commitment and engagement. This integrated approach ensures that change initiatives are resilient and sustainable, fostering an organizational culture that is adaptable and responsive to future challenges. For instance, by consistently applying the principles of reciprocity and credibility, leaders can build a culture of trust and collaboration, which is essential for long-term sustainability (Cameron & Green, 2024).

The visual representation in Figure 10 was created to illustrate a cyclical process for implementing and sustaining change in an educational setting, specifically focusing on my role as the IDT SERT. It represents the melding together of the K8SCM and the IWA model. The circles represent the stages of the K8SCM, while the rectangles represent the steps of the IWA. The IWA takes place in the early stages of the cycle to ensure the creation and development of the relationships required to carry out this work. This process emphasizes the importance of building relationships, fostering collaboration, and maintaining momentum to achieve long-term, systemic change in educational practices, particularly for supporting students with FASD. The cycle does not end but instead pauses with the triangle, indicating that further change, while necessary, is beyond the scope of the DiP.

Combining Cohen and Bradford's Influence without Authority (IWA) model with Kotter's 8-Step Change Model creates a robust framework for driving organizational change. Kotter's model offers a structured, top-down approach ideal for strategic initiatives, emphasizing steps like creating urgency and building a coalition, but can be overly reliant on formal authority. Conversely, the IWA model leverages relationships, credibility, and reciprocity, making it suitable for middle leaders and fostering grassroots support. Integrating these models allows for a holistic change management strategy where Kotter's precise planning is enriched by the IWA's relational approach, ensuring commitment from all organizational levels. This synergy is crucial for initiatives such as supporting students with FASD within educational settings. The visual representation combines these models, emphasizing relationship building and collaboration, and underscores the importance of a continuous, adaptable approach to achieve long-term, systemic change. This integration fosters a culture of trust and collaboration, which is essential for sustaining change and responding to future challenges.

Figure 10

Layered K8SCM and the IWA model
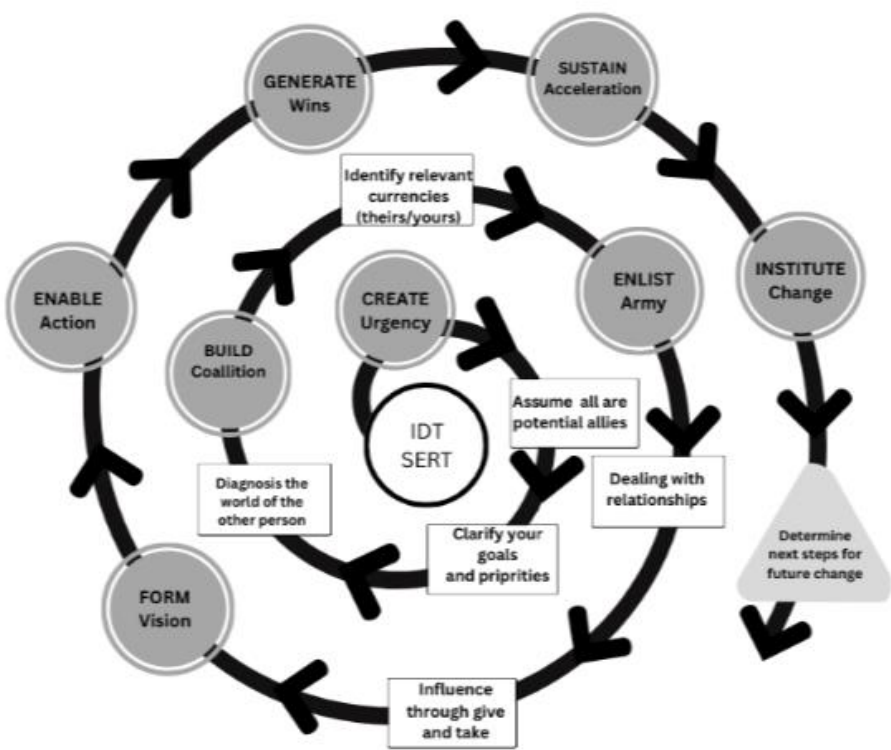
Note: This figure is an amalgamation of the K8SCM, represented by the gray circles, and the IWA model, represented by the rectangles. As the IDT SERT, I am centred in the middle of this process. The cycle pauses with the gray triangle, indicating the need to determine the next steps for future change, which is beyond the scope of this DiP.

Organizational Change Readiness

I have recognized a noticeable and distinct knowledge gap among all SMDSB school-based staff between the best practices required to teach students with FASD and actual observable classroom strategies and teaching practices that are being used. Educators and administrators cannot develop an understanding of best teaching practices for this population without first understanding the symptomology and challenges associated with FASD. Once an understanding has been established, educators and administrators can delve into the best practices and strategies required to enable students' academic and social success with this exceptionality.

There are many existing professional development initiatives within the SMDSB. Teaching and support staff must attend SMDSB-sanctioned professional development on certain pre-determined days within the school year. This is outside of the required professional development held at school-based staff meetings. SMDSB staff are provided with professional learning opportunities aligned with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), Director's Action Plan (DAP), and priorities determined by the Ministry of Education. Professional development is heavily focused on students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This poses a potential problem for my proposed change implementation plan in that staff may be experiencing professional development fatigue and not having the time in their schedules to implement further initiatives.

As mentioned earlier, FASD has a high rate of Indigenization. As such, all initiatives implemented must consider the impact on this population. This would be an opportune time to

attempt to merge the work of the SERTs with the work of the First Nations, Inuit & Metis (FNMI) consultants and educators. The members of the FNMI team hold a wealth of information, knowledge, and understanding. Aligning the work done by this department with the actions in my proposed change implementation plan would ensure that issues of decolonization and equity were addressed.

Assessing the Readiness for Change

Assessing an organization's current state is essential for determining its future direction (Deszca et al., 2020). As such, the readiness of the SMDSB as an organization and the readiness of the educators within the organization are examined below.

SMDSB's Organizational Readiness for Change

The preparedness of an organization for change hinges on the collective past experiences of its members with change, the adaptable nature of the organizational culture, the openness, commitment, and involvement of leadership in orchestrating change readiness, and the confidence that members have in the leadership (Deszca et al., 2020). Using the "Rate the Organization's Readiness for Change" tool developed by Deszca et al. (2020), I assessed the current readiness of the SMDSB (See Appendix A for the specific responses to this readiness assessment tool). Responding to the thirty-six questions as a teacher within the system viewing the organization, SMDSB received a score of 13. It is important to note that Deszca et al. (2020) note that "if the score is below 10, the organization is not likely ready for change at present" (p. 115). As an organization, SMDSB comes close to the unlikeness of change occurring for students with FASD.

Educator's Readiness for Change

While the entire organization of SMDSB may still need to be prepared for change

concerning students with FASD, educators are more ready for the change in this DiP. Change readiness progresses when members of the organization, in this case, educators, recognize how the current misalignment hinders improved outcomes and are confident that realigning is both necessary and achievable (Deszca et al., 2020). With this in mind, the "Rate the Organization's Readiness to Change" survey was adapted to examine educators' readiness within SMDSB. When looking only at the attitudes and behaviours of the educators, a score of 26 was achieved. As such, it is essential to note that while the SMDSB may not be prepared for profound and systemic changes for students with FASD, the educators who work in the field directly with these students are. When examining individual Change readiness, Deszca et al. (2020) note that "if previous change experiences have been predominately negative and unproductive, employees tend to become disillusioned and cynical ("we tried and it didn't work attitude) (p. 111). This is a fair response to change forced upon teachers, offering little control and ownership. However, this PoP and eventual solutions intend to include those voices of teachers and support staff implementing change.

Leadership Ethics in Organizational Change

With a focus on justice, Paul Freire explains the ethical nature of education in that "education cannot be neutral. It either liberates or domesticates. This is why it is inherently an ethical and political act" (p. 69). Further, Fiedler and Van Haren (2009) expound that special education has intricate ethical challenges. Specifically, Bon and Bigbee (2011) explain that SERTs are required to make many decisions that carry ethical implications for children with diverse abilities, both in the short and long term. Further, SERTs are responsible, in part, for the "determination of educational programs, supplemental services, instructional practices, and, ultimately, the implementation of policies and regulations – all of which influence present and

future opportunities for the child to access a meaningful education program" (Bon & Bigbee, 2011, p. 330). The ethical implications and challenges of these responsibilities are addressed below.

Ethics and Positionality

Being an ethical Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) aligns with my positionality by emphasizing the values of justice, equity, and care that are central to my professional and personal ethos. My commitment to improving the educational experiences of students with FASD within the SMDSB reflects my deep understanding of the ethical implications of my role. This alignment is evident in my dedication to fostering inclusive and supportive learning environments, advocating for destigmatization, and addressing the racialization of FASD. My positionality, grounded in a desire to support marginalized students and ensure their access to meaningful education, reinforces my ethical responsibilities as a SERT to challenge biases, promote equity, and provide compassionate care to all students.

Ethic of Care

The ethic of care directly relates to FASD by prioritizing the nurturing and encouragement of students with FASD, ensuring their unique needs and capabilities are recognized and supported within the educational process. The ethic of care, as explained by Noddings, means that "students are at the centre of the educational process and need to be nurtured and encouraged, a concept that likely goes against the grain of those attempting to make "achievement" the top priority" (as cited in, Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016, p. 32). Further, an ethics of care revolves around the responsibility of individuals to attend to and care for one another (Kurian, 2023). Educators demonstrate the ethic of care when they believe in the capabilities of a student (Kurian, 2023). Noddings (1992) states, "The first job of schools is to

care for our children" (as cited in Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016, p. 32). At the heart of this DiP is care for students who live with FASD. The ethic of care aligns with my work on FASD by emphasizing the importance of nurturing and encouraging students, placing their needs and well-being at the center of the educational process. This approach ensures that educators are committed to believing in and supporting the capabilities of students with FASD, fostering an environment where they can thrive and achieve meaningful educational outcomes.

As a middle leader, my response to the ethic of care would involve actively promoting a supportive and inclusive school culture that prioritizes the well-being and individual needs of all students. This includes implementing professional development for staff on the principles of the ethic of care, ensuring that policies and practices are student-centred, and fostering strong, empathetic relationships between teachers, students, and their families. Middle leaders should also advocate for resources and support systems that address the unique challenges faced by students, particularly those with FASD, to create a nurturing and empowering educational environment.

Stigmatization of FASD

When discussing the area of ethics, it is essential to examine the topic of stigma. Shifrer (2013) defines stigma as the "prejudicial attitudes toward and negative treatment of people with characteristics deemed dangerous, undesirable, or unworthy" (p. 463). Within the realm of education, stigma can significantly impact access to assessment, intervention, and support (Dunbar Winsor, 2020). For example, public perception views FASD as "preventable, since exposure to alcohol in utero is a necessary factor for its development" (Zizzo & Racine, 2017, p. 414). As such, "FASD may be the most stigmatized area of a very stigmatized subject, being women and alcohol" (Choate & Badry, 2019, p. 36). It is essential to this DiP that the work

alleviates the stigma students and families experience through education and re-education of professionals involved in learning about students with FASD.

As a middle leader, my response to the stigmatization of FASD would involve proactively addressing and challenging negative perceptions and biases within the school community. This includes educating staff, students, and families about FASD to foster understanding and empathy, implementing inclusive policies that support students with FASD, and promoting a culture of acceptance and respect. Middle leaders should also facilitate professional development opportunities focused on destigmatizing FASD and advocate for the necessary resources and support to ensure that students with FASD receive equitable access to education and interventions.

Racialization of FASD

The racialization of FASD poses a primary ethical concern throughout my DiP. Sadly, FASD continues to be identified as an Indigenous issue (Hunting & Browne, n.d.; Yousefi & Chaufan, 2022). Hunting and Brown (n.d.) point out that the methods used to screen Indigenous women for:

> Substance use during pregnancy have been criticized for an inherent racial and class bias in the ways they are designed and applied, especially contributing to the over-surveillance of Aboriginal mothers. These racialized and gendered associations between alcohol use and 'bad mothering' have perpetuated the hypervisibility of Aboriginal women in discourses of FASD. (p. 40)

Colonial practices, beliefs, and policies, and the legacy of intergenerational trauma, cultural disruption, and the disproportionate rates of sexual assault, violence, and trauma perpetuated against Indigenous women contribute to substance abuse and, in turn, children

impacted by FASD (Yousefi & Chaufan, 2022). With this knowledge, all work being conducted throughout this DiP must be mindful of how colonial practices continue to impact Indigenous students throughout the SMDSB.

As a middle leader, my response to the racialization of FASD involves actively working to dismantle biases and address systemic inequities within the school environment. This includes providing staff with education and training on cultural sensitivity and the historical context of FASD, particularly its impact on Indigenous communities. Middle leaders should advocate for culturally responsive teaching practices and ensure that the screening and support processes for FASD are free from racial and class biases. Additionally, fostering partnerships with Indigenous communities and involving them in decision-making processes can help create a more inclusive and equitable educational setting for students affected by FASD.

Whose Voices Are Missing?

The phrase "Nothing about Us, Without Us" has been attributed to many groups throughout history; however, the sentiment is the same and applies directly to this PoP. All individuals want to be actively involved in planning policies, strategies, and decision-making opportunities that impact and affect their lives (United Nations, 2004). Further, Busse et al. (1995) are quoted as defining social validation as a "research method that facilitates involvement of multiple participants in the evaluation process" (as in Bastable et al., 2021, p. 817). In context, social validation and the inclusion of those individuals with FASD in discussions about best practices and the improvement of learning environments for students with FASD "may decrease bias, increase efficacy, and prevent harm" (Bastable et al., 2021, p. 817). Within this DiP, it is an ethical imperative that the voices of individuals with FASD are heard in order to ensure that the

changes that are intended to occur are of value and essential to those who will be impacted, such as students like Avery.

In summary, this DiP underscores the critical need for an ethically grounded approach to education, particularly for students with FASD. By acknowledging the inherent ethical and political nature of education, as emphasized by Freire (2007), it becomes clear that educators must navigate complex ethical challenges to provide meaningful and equitable learning opportunities. This requires a commitment to the ethic of care, addressing and mitigating the stigma surrounding FASD, and confronting the racialization of the disorder that disproportionately affects Indigenous communities. Furthermore, it is essential to include the voices of individuals with FASD in the planning and implementation of educational strategies to ensure their needs and perspectives are genuinely represented. By focusing on these ethical imperatives, the dissertation aims to foster an educational environment that supports justice, equity, and the holistic development of all students, particularly those living with FASD.

Strategies and Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

When evaluating potential remedies for the PoP, all initiatives, professional development, and support must be student-centred and contribute towards the improvement of the learning and educational experiences of children and youth living with FASD. Through my observations of existing teaching practices, I see a clear need for the education and re-education of those working with students with FASD. Frontline workers have shared their need for more significant support, resources, and access to professional development. Furthermore, from my role in providing support to schools and classrooms, I have observed that resources and supports must be more readily available, including access to Special Education Consultants and Interdisciplinary Teams SERTs.

Truth and Reconciliation

The "Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #34: A Framework for Action" (2018) document aims to meet the needs of individuals with FASD within the criminal justice system through targeted policy and practice changes. Drawing from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's findings on the Indian Residential Schools (IRS), which have caused intergenerational trauma and social issues in Indigenous communities, it emphasizes reforms to support offenders with FASD better. According to the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume One, "about 1% of Canadian children are born with some form of disability related to prenatal alcohol consumption, but estimates from Canada and the United States suggest that 15% to 20% of prisoners have FASD" (p. 174). The commission advocates for immediate action to prevent FASD and improve the management of its detrimental effects. Indigenous communities, in particular, require enhanced programming to effectively address the issue of FASD (TRC, 2015).

Further, the document outlines a comprehensive Framework for Action with 12 actionable items promoting systemic change across various sectors, including justice professionals, policymakers, and researchers. Actions involve mandatory education on systemic racism, equal access to Gladue reports, FASD-informed training, expanding therapeutic justice practices, improving diagnostic methods, and strengthening community support. The repercussions of inadequate educational attainment among former residential school students have resulted in persistent unemployment or underemployment, poverty, substandard housing, substance abuse, domestic violence, and poor health in adulthood. While there has been gradual progress in educational success rates, Indigenous peoples continue to experience significantly lower educational and economic outcomes compared to other Canadians (TRC). Further, in

2011-2012, Indigenous peoples made up "28% of all admissions to sentenced custody, even though Aboriginal people made up only 4% of the Canadian population. The situation of women is even more disproportionate: in 2011-2012, 43% of admissions of women to sentenced custody were Aboriginal" (TRC, p. 170). The impact of FASD exacerbates all these issues and others affecting Indigenous communities. The framework also highlights the importance of interagency collaboration and culturally appropriate practices, aiming to bridge the gap between evidence-based policies and practical implementation. The document provides a roadmap for transformative change, urging key groups to adopt these evidence-based strategies to improve outcomes for individuals with FASD.

This framework has significant implications for the education system, especially in supporting students with FASD. Early recognition and intervention in educational settings can mitigate long-term challenges. By incorporating mandatory education on systemic racism and FASD-informed training for educators and staff, schools can better identify and support students with FASD, promoting a strengths-based, student-centred environment that enhances well-being and academic success. Interagency collaboration and culturally appropriate practices within schools align with the TRC's broader goals, fostering an inclusive and supportive educational experience for all students, particularly those from Indigenous backgrounds impacted by the residential school legacy.

As a non-Indigenous ally in the decolonizing process, through advocacy, I can attempt to "raise consciousness regarding how colonizing mindsets—that do not privilege Indigenous ways of knowing or recognize Indigenous land and sovereignty—exist within ourselves and the institutions within which we operate" (Krusz, 2020, p. 205). Working together with Indigenous educators in the SMDSB, advocacy initiatives could take place for those students who are both

Indigenous and living with FASD and those who support them. I would be able to use my role as IDT SERT to co-lead professional development and conversations, bringing forward stories from the lived experiences of students with FASD. This could also be done in conjunction with the work the SMDSB is doing around decolonizing and anti-oppressive education.

Option One: Engaging the Special Education Advisory Committee

The Ontario Ministry of Education (MOE) mandates that every school board in Ontario must have a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). A SEAC consists of school board trustees elected by the community and representatives from local associations with a vested interest in special education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2024). Further, a SEAC offers crucial guidance on special education matters to the local board or school authority and provides recommendations on anything influencing the creation, advancement, and implementation of special education programs and services (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2024).

> The MOE (2024) requires each district school board SEAC to be made up of representatives from up to twelve local associations or affiliated associations or organizations; One or two people to represent the interests of First Nations students attending board schools under a tuition agreement; One or more additional members at large who are not: representatives of a local association, trustees of the board members of another board committee.

According to the regulation, a local association is defined as an organization of parents operating within a board's jurisdiction. Furthermore, it must be affiliated with an association or organization incorporated under federal or provincial law and not comprised of professional educators. The local association's scope extends throughout Ontario, and its primary purpose is

to advance the interests and well-being of one or more groups of exceptional children or adults (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2024).

Individuals employed by a school board are ineligible to serve as members of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) of the board employing them. Nevertheless, they may participate as members in the SEAC of another school board, provided they meet the eligibility criteria for voting in the elections for members of that particular school board (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2024).

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education, Ontario Regulation 464/97, concerning the SEAC, "A special education advisory committee of a board may make recommendations to the board in respect of any matter affecting the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils of the board." (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2024). This regulation is of the utmost importance to this PoP and DiP, and the SEAC has the potential to ensure that students with FASD receive the special education programs and services to which they are entitled.

SMDSB & SEAC

As per Ministry of Education guidelines, the SMDSB SEAC has representation from twelve community organizations that represent the needs of students with Special Education requirements. These organizations include Easter Seals, Association for Bright Children of Ontario, Autism Ontario, Learning Disabilities Association, Down Syndrome Association, Ontario Parents for Visually Impaired, and VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. (SMDSB, 2023)[3]

The SMDSB SEAC includes representatives from elementary and secondary school principals, the Principals of Student Services, and two Superintendents of Schools who attend the

monthly SEAC meetings (SMDSB, 2023). The SMDSB website lists actions that the 2022-2023 SEAC participated in. These include but are not limited to reviewing the mental health and addictions strategy, introducing a transitions strategy to support students with disabilities, and membership sharing of successful practices (SMDSB, 2023).

Public access to SMDSB SEAC minutes goes back to 2004. A review of these meeting minutes from most recent to 2022 indicates no mention of FASD or any form of learning need arising from prenatal alcohol and drug exposure (SMDSB, 2023). There is also public access to the SMDSB SEAC handbook through the SMDSB website (SMDSB, 2023). Within this handbook, there is a presentation request form, although the submission process needs to be clarified.

SMDSB SEAC Engagement

Based on Ministry of Education and SMDSB guidelines, a SEAC has the ability and reach necessary to enact changes needed to improve the learning for students with FASD. As such, a detailed presentation about the specifics of FASD diagnosis and the learning needs these students encounter is part of this proposed solution. The current lack of understanding of FASD by educators could be brought forward, and how teaching practices can be improved could be explained based on current FASD research and best educational practices. The voices of students with FASD could be included to relay to the SEAC the urgency of addressing this deficit in practices and support.

When engaging the SEAC, it is essential to remember the prejudice and stigmatization that students with FASD and their families encounter on a daily basis -- and when navigating the education system. As such, the utmost care and respect must be taken in order for students and families to feel engaged and supported in a meaningful way. As per the SMDSB SEAC

Handbook (SMDSB, 2022), teachers are encouraged to attend and observe SEAC meetings. As such, I would begin engaging the SEAC by attending an initial meeting. After initial attendance, I would approach SEAC members with the SEAC Presentation Form to present an overview of FASD. This presentation could engage the SEAC further to increase the support of students with FASD.

Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) in Ontario are designed to support the needs of students with disabilities by providing advice on special education programs and policies. However, there are some criticisms and potential negative impacts. For instance, there are often inter-organizational conflicts among different vital groups, such as educational systems, unions, government agencies, and community organizations, which can hinder the efficiency and effectiveness of SEACs in delivering robust special education programs (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2020). Additionally, some educational institutions have reported unclear responsibilities and a lack of understanding regarding their obligations under legislative frameworks like the Ontario Disability Act (ODA) and the Ontario Human Rights Code, leading to inadequate implementation of policies meant to support students with special needs (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2020). Furthermore, the extent to which SEACs influence board decisions can vary significantly, with some members feeling that their recommendations are not always adequately considered or implemented by school boards (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2020). Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that SEACs can effectively fulfill their mandate and improve outcomes for students with special needs.

The PAAC on SEAC 2020 survey reveals several drawbacks in the functioning of Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs). Key areas of concern include a marked decline in meaningful participation in board procedures, such as the Special Education Plan and

Budget, compared to previous surveys. SEAC members reported that information is only sometimes shared proactively, and they often feel they are asked to approve decisions that the board has already made. Additionally, there are inconsistencies in public access to SEAC information, with only 40% of boards having a SEAC brochure available, down from 2014. Recruitment and retention of SEAC members pose challenges, especially in smaller boards. Moreover, many respondents indicated difficulty in navigating school board websites to find SEAC information. Finally, there is a need for better orientation and ongoing training for SEAC members to ensure they understand their roles and can participate confidently. These findings suggest that while SEACs play a crucial role in special education, there are areas for improvement in their engagement, communication, and support systems.

SEAC Impact on Students with FASD

Within the SMDSB, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) significantly influences the educational experiences of students with FASD, impacting their classroom experience in various ways. SEAC provides crucial input and advice on the development and implementation of special education programs and services within school boards, ensuring that policies are inclusive and cater to the unique needs of students with FASD (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). This directly affects classroom practices by making sure appropriate resources, accommodations, and support are available to address the specific challenges faced by these students (Brownell, 2018). SEAC also advocates for adequate funding and resources, influencing budget decisions to ensure classrooms have the necessary tools, technology, and support staff, such as educational assistants, to effectively support students with FASD (SEAC Handbook, 2011).

Additionally, SEAC can recommend professional development opportunities for teachers and staff, enhancing their understanding and skills in supporting students with FASD (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). Well-trained teachers are better equipped to implement differentiated instruction, manage diverse classroom needs, and create an inclusive learning environment that benefits students with FASD (Rodger, 2015). SEAC serves as a bridge between parents, the community, and the school board, ensuring the voices of families with children who have FASD are heard (FASD Ontario, 2020). This collaboration fosters better communication and partnerships between home and school, creating a supportive environment for students. When parents are involved and informed, they can better support their child's education at home, reinforcing classroom learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017).

Moreover, SEAC monitors the implementation of special education programs and services, holding the school board accountable for their effectiveness in meeting the needs of students with FASD (SEAC Handbook, 2011). This oversight ensures that the specific needs of these students are consistently met, allowing for necessary adjustments to improve classroom practices and outcomes (Brownell, 2018). Finally, SEAC raises awareness about the challenges and needs of students with FASD, advocating for their rights and promoting inclusive education (FASD Ontario, 2020). Increased awareness among educators and students fosters a more accepting and inclusive school culture, positively affecting the classroom environment (Rodger, 2015). By influencing policies, advocating for resources, supporting professional development, fostering parent and community involvement, ensuring accountability, and raising awareness, SEAC helps create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. This, in turn, enhances the classroom experience for students with FASD, promoting their academic and social success (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017).

Option Two: Educator Professional Development & Support

The educational journey for students with FASD poses challenges not only for the students themselves but also for all those involved in their education. This encompasses educators, including administrators and teachers, caregivers and allied professionals such as teaching assistants, psychologists, social workers, and counsellors (Poth et al., 2014). Further, the social and emotional difficulties that are paired with FASD present unique challenges and affect how students form relationships with teachers and peers (Poth et al., 2014). Poth et al. (2014) explain that "the academic and behavioral challenges of students with FASD can be so profound that it is sometimes difficult to recognize strengths or encourage positive behaviors when they are demonstrated" (p. 254).

Research has shown that educators express difficulties in the classroom due to a lack of understanding regarding the intricate learning, social, and behavioural challenges faced by students with FASD. Consequently, these educators frequently need help comprehending and proficiently addressing the learning requirements of students affected by FASD. Insufficient opportunities for professional development contribute to a shortage of essential knowledge and skills necessary for implementing appropriate educational programs (Poth et al., 2014; Blackburn, 2009; Carpenter, 2011).

FASD Professional Development

Through classroom observations, listening to anecdotal recounts of those in classrooms, conversations with practitioners, and an awareness of what SMDSB provides for Professional Development, there is a clear and glaring deficit in the understanding of educators regarding FASD, including, but not limited to, causes, symptomology, best teaching practices, and programming. As such, it is imperative to the well-being and success of students with FASD that

a professional development initiative be offered to all educators. Professional development and education could improve not only the lived experience of students but also the experiences of educators.

A series of professional development opportunities could be designed for educators who work with students with FASD. The first PD in the series could provide educators with a basic understanding of FASD and what it looks like for students. This could help them understand strengths, challenges, and difficulties that might be present in the classroom.

Educators play a crucial role in supporting students with FASD. They require specialized and current training on FASD and related educational practices, such as understanding the neurological impact of this disorder and using knowledge of FASD to create structured, supportive learning environments that address the specific cognitive and behavioural needs of students with FASD as well as providing interventions which may include individualized learning plans, the use of visual aids, and positive behavioural supports to enhance learning outcomes and social integration for these students (Boys et al., 2016; Lees et al., 2021; Makela et al., 2019; Millians, 2015).

Given that teachers and support staff will inevitably encounter children with FASD throughout their careers, there is an urgent need to develop and implement systematic training to enhance their understanding of these students' needs and effective educational strategies. These include such strategies as implementing structured and predictable classroom environments, using visual supports, and employing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), to name only a few (Boys et al., 2016; Lees et al., 2021; Millians, 2015).

Understanding the brain-based nature of FASD behaviour is crucial for educators. This recognition necessitates employing different approaches than those commonly used in standard

classroom settings. (Duquette and Parr, 2022; Makela et al., 2019; Millar et al., 2014; Popova et al., 2016). Structured training programs designed explicitly for FASD can be integrated into schools' existing PD framework. Programs like metacognitive strategy training have been shown to be effective in helping educators support students with FASD by teaching them to think about their thinking and use strategies to improve learning and self-regulation. (Makela et al., 2019).

Research indicates that professional development significantly improves outcomes for children with FASD. For instance, a study on metacognitive strategy training showed that students taught by educators trained in these strategies exhibited enhanced spontaneous use of metacognitive techniques, positively affecting their learning and self-regulation. Studies further emphasize the necessity of quality resources and training for educators, compiling evidence that well-trained teachers can better identify, manage, and support students with FASD, resulting in improved educational experiences and outcomes (Boys et al., 2016; Lees et al., 2021; Makela et al., 2019)

As evidenced by the studies required to write this DiP, there is much to learn about FASD and the lived experiences of students with FASD. As such, further sessions would include presentations from former students about how they navigated the educational system while living with FASD. A professional learning cycle would be implemented. Also, to ensure the engagement of educators in this professional learning, it would be essential to ensure that participant voices are heard and that the information obtained is used in future sessions. For example, should educators indicate that they require a more in-depth understanding of the co-regulation necessary for students with FASD, this would be an area of focus. Such feedback would be attained through feedback forms and discussions with participants.

As a teacher leader with minimal agency, advocating for comprehensive professional development on FASD involves highlighting the urgent need for such training to school administrators and decision-makers. I propose foundational workshops that provide an in-depth understanding of FASD, its causes, symptoms, and the diverse ways it can manifest in students. Emphasizing the importance of interactive learning experiences, such as case studies and simulations, can help decision-makers understand the potential impact of such training on improving teaching practices and student outcomes (Millians, 2020; Reid et al., 2022).

In addition to initial workshops, ongoing support and mentorship are crucial. I recommend implementing mentorship programs where experienced educators or specialists in FASD guide and support their peers. Highlighting research that shows mentorship leads to sustained improvements in teaching practices can strengthen the case for these programs (Smith et al., 2021; Thompson, 2023).

To further support educators, leveraging technology to create online resources and platforms could be suggested. These platforms can offer webinars, instructional videos, and discussion forums, providing flexible, on-demand access to professional development materials. By presenting recent studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of integrating technology in PD, I can advocate for its inclusion in the professional development framework (Brown et al., 2020; Zhao & Frank, 2021). Through these combined efforts, I aim to build a robust professional development framework that equips educators with the knowledge and skills to effectively support students with FASD despite having limited influence over the final decisions.

Option Three: Professional Learning Community with Support Network

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Support Networks represent a pivotal approach to improving the educational experience of students with FASD. PLCs create an

environment where educators can collaboratively enhance their teaching strategies, specifically tailored to the unique needs of students with FASD. These communities foster a culture of continuous learning and collective problem-solving, enabling teachers to share resources, discuss challenges, and implement best practices. According to Watson and Fullan (2020), effective PLCs are characterized by their focus on learning, a culture of collaboration, and a commitment to results, which can significantly benefit the educational outcomes of students with FASD.

Starting a PLC with minimal agency as a teacher can be challenging but achievable through grassroots efforts and leveraging existing school resources. Teachers can begin by identifying colleagues who share a common interest in supporting students with FASD and propose regular meetings to discuss strategies and share experiences. Utilizing free online resources, professional development webinars, and connecting with external FASD experts can provide valuable content for these meetings. Additionally, securing administrative support, even if initially minimal, can help in allocating time and resources for the PLC's activities. Owen (2021) highlights the importance of building trust and mutual respect within the group, which is essential for effective collaboration and sustained engagement.

The impact of PLCs on the educational experience of students with FASD can be profound. Through regular collaboration, teachers can develop a deeper understanding of FASD and implement more effective instructional strategies. For example, PLCs can focus on differentiated instruction techniques, sensory integration practices, and behavioural interventions tailored to the needs of students with FASD. By sharing success stories and troubleshooting challenges collectively, teachers can create a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment. Research by Hord (2020) indicates that PLCs enhance teacher efficacy and

promote a more positive school culture, which directly benefits students with diverse learning needs.

Behavioural challenges associated with FASD can be particularly stressful for educators. PLCs provide a platform for teachers to support each other in managing these challenges. Through regular discussions, teachers can share strategies for behaviour management, such as positive reinforcement, structured routines, and individualized support plans. Additionally, PLCs can facilitate teachers' access to mental health resources and professional counselling, helping them manage stress and prevent burnout. This collaborative approach ensures that teachers do not feel isolated in their efforts and can draw on the collective wisdom of their peers (Reiser et al., 2020).

To address the specific needs of students with FASD, PLCs can incorporate support networks that include specialists such as psychologists, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists. These professionals can provide targeted training and ongoing support to teachers, ensuring that they are equipped with the latest evidence-based practices. Makela et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in supporting students with complex needs, and PLCs offer an ideal framework for integrating these diverse perspectives into everyday teaching practice.

In the context of the SMDSB, establishing PLCs focused on FASD can be a transformative initiative. By fostering a collaborative culture and providing continuous professional development, SMDSB can enhance the capacity of its educators to meet the needs of students with FASD. This approach not only improves educational outcomes for these students but also contributes to a more supportive and resilient teaching community. As educators come together to share their knowledge and experiences, they can collectively

overcome the challenges posed by FASD and create a more inclusive and effective educational environment.

Comparison of Options

The three options outlined above are compared and contrasted based on the direct or indirect correlation to the improvement in student well-being and achievement, the specific links to the TRC, the fiscal resources required to implement the option, the voluntary nature of staff involvement in the option, the agency to follow through on the option, and the number of SMDSB employees involved in the option. The solution chosen through careful assessment is a hybrid between Option Two and Option Three.

Table 3 presents an assessment of each option based on the specific criteria. The table compares and contrasts three options related to enhancing the educational experience for students with special needs in the SMDSB.

Option One, Engaging the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), has an indirect correlation to student well-being and achievement and links to several Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, specifically TRC 7, 10.1, 10.2, and 34.i. It requires minimal fiscal resources and staff participation is voluntary, with minimal agency involvement. The primary SMDSB staff involved are SEAC members, including trustees and administrators.

Option Two, Educator Professional Development & Support, directly correlates with improvements in student well-being and achievement. It links to a broader range of TRC Calls to Action, including TRC 7, 10.i, 10.ii, 10.v, 10.vi, 34.ii, 34.iii, and 34.iv. This option also requires minimal fiscal resources, specifically for release time for all involved, and staff participation is voluntary. However, it necessitates maximal agency involvement and involves a diverse group of

SMDSB staff, including teachers, educational assistants (EAs), designated early childhood educators (DECEs), support staff, administrators, and para-professionals.

Option Three, PLC & Support Network, also directly correlates with improvements in student well-being and achievement. It links to a broader range of TRC Calls to Action, including TRC 7, 10.i, 10.ii, 10.v, 10.vi, 34.ii, 34.iii, and 34.iv. This option also requires minimal fiscal resources, specifically for release time for all involved, and staff participation is voluntary. However, it also necessitates maximal agency involvement. It involves a diverse group of SMDSB staff, including teachers, educational assistants (EAs), designated early childhood educators (DECEs), support staff, administrators, and para-professionals.

All three options are designed to be cost-effective, requiring minimal fiscal resources. However, administrators who are committed to supporting students with FASD would cover any additional costs, such as release time for support staff and teachers. This includes resources like photocopies and other items necessary for the implementation of the options, which would be allocated from the budget lines of administrators who recognize the value of this work and the importance of their staff's involvement. The value of this work is significant, and the administrators understand and appreciate the efforts of their staff in this regard. While all options require personnel resources, only the author would attend the SEAC on behalf of students with FASD, ensuring their needs are represented.

Table 1

Comparing and Contrasting Options

	Option One: Engaging the Special Education Advisory Committee	Option Two: Educator Professional Development	Option Three: PLC with Support Network
-Directly/Indirectly correlates to improvement in student well-being and achievement	Indirect	Direct	Direct
Links to the TRC Calls to Action	TRC 7; 10.1; 10.2; 34.i,	TRC 7; 10.i; 10.ii; 10.v; 10.vi; 34.i; 34. iii; 34.iv	TRC 7; 10.i; 10.ii; 10.v; 10.vi; 34.i; 34. iii; 34.iv
Fiscal Resources	Minimal	Minimal Release Time for all involved	Minimal Release Time Development of Resources
Staff Participation	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary
Agency	Minimal	Maximal	Maximal
SMDSB Staff Involved	SEAC Members (Trustees/ Administrators)	Teachers/ EA/ DECE/ Support Staff/ Administrators/ Para-Professionals	Teachers/ EA/ DECE/ Support Staff/ Administrators/ Para-Professionals

In terms of time required for each option, each has a different requirement for time and in different ways. The engagement of SEAC requires attendance in evening meetings as well as time for communication and engagement of the members. While it demands the least amount of time, it provides a platform for discussing and addressing the needs of students with FASD at a systemic level. Educator Professional Development and PLC with Support Network require front-end time to develop the professional development workshops and seminars. They both also require time to build the relationships needed to have engagement, seeing the value in work and how it would benefit their classrooms and the students that they have in their classes. There is

also a significant amount of time required, not only in planning but also in the implementation and delivery of the programs.

Chosen Option

Combining the strengths of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with targeted Professional Development (PD) programs offers a robust hybrid solution to improve the educational experience of students with FASD. By leveraging the collaborative nature of PLCs, educators can regularly come together to share strategies, discuss challenges, and develop best practices specific to FASD. This collaborative environment fosters continuous learning and problem-solving, which are crucial for addressing the diverse needs of students with FASD. As Owen (2021) emphasizes, building trust and mutual respect within PLCs is essential for effective collaboration and sustained engagement. When PLCs are combined with structured PD programs, teachers receive the specialized training needed to understand FASD's neurological impacts and implement appropriate interventions. This hybrid approach ensures that educators are not only well-informed but also supported by a community of peers.

Incorporating professional development into the PLC framework enhances the overall effectiveness of both initiatives. PD programs can provide educators with the latest research, strategies, and tools necessary for supporting students with FASD, addressing the identified deficits in understanding causes, symptomology, and best teaching practices. By integrating PD sessions into PLC meetings, educators can immediately apply new knowledge in a supportive, collaborative setting, ensuring that learning is both practical and relevant. Furthermore, this hybrid model facilitates ongoing mentorship and peer support, which are crucial for managing the behavioural challenges associated with FASD. Teachers can share their experiences, troubleshoot issues collectively, and access mental health resources to prevent burnout, thus

creating a more resilient and effective teaching community. As research by Makela et al. (2020) indicates, interdisciplinary collaboration and continuous professional development significantly improve educational outcomes for students with complex needs, including those with FASD.

Aligning the chosen option with my role as an IDT SERT and as a middle leader involves understanding the significant influence that can be exerted without formal authority. Middle leaders in education can facilitate professional development, advocate for systemic changes, and support the implementation of policies at the ground level. By incorporating mandatory education on systemic racism and FASD-informed training for educators and staff, middle leaders can ensure schools are better equipped to identify and support students with FASD. This approach promotes a strengths-based, student-centered environment that enhances well-being and academic success. Middle leaders play a crucial role in fostering interagency collaboration and culturally appropriate practices within schools, aligning with the TRC's broader goals. As a middle leader, I can leverage my position to drive change from within, advocating for resources, training, and policies that support inclusive and supportive educational experiences for all students, particularly those from Indigenous backgrounds impacted by the residential school legacy.

Chapter 2 Conclusion

Chapter 2 describes middle leadership and how I approach change in this dissertation in practice. Further, the IWA model articulates the framework I can use for leading the change process within my organization. Deszca et al.'s assessment tools addressed the readiness for change in SMDSB. The ethical considerations, challenges, and responsibilities within the SMDSB were then examined. Finally, this chapter provided three options for addressing the PoP and detailed the strengths and challenges of each option.

Chapter 3 will discuss the implementation plan and details of the communication. It also addresses monitoring and evaluating the changes required to address the needs of students living with FASD.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Communication, Monitoring and Evaluation

Chapter 3 discusses an implementation plan of the Hybrid Option (HO) for improving the educational experience and well-being of students with FASD. When educators are supported and have an increased understanding of the challenges students with FASD face daily within the education system, teaching practices can be altered to improve student achievement. Chapter 3 reviews the communication strategies that will assist educators in understanding FASD and how they can improve the learning experiences of students with FASD. Strategies used in monitoring and evaluating the change process consider the monitoring and evaluation that must occur, which are also discussed in Chapter 3. This chapter concludes with next steps and future considerations for how to continue to improve the educational experience of students with FASD.

Change Implementation Plan

The heart of this DiP is students, like Avery. Everything proposed is done with the primary purpose of improving the school experiences of students with FASD. While the scope and focus of this DiP is on the teaching practices used and the school experiences of this student group, it is the hope that improvement in this area will lead to improvement in other areas of a student's life. Improving teachers' understanding of FASD can lead to the improvement of teacher attitude, which has a direct and differential impact on student's educational experiences and opportunities (Cook, 2001).

With the support of my student services coordinator, I will be involved in the training and delivery of the PD. I will also be a facilitator of the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focusing on FASD. I am committed to creating a collaborative environment. My role is not just about delivering training sessions but also about fostering these communities where educators can share strategies and best practices. By facilitating these communities, I aim to create a culture of continuous learning and support among educators, with a specific focus on the needs

of students with FASD. I want each educator to feel included and part of this supportive community where their input and collaboration are not just valued but integral to the success of our mission.

In my efforts to implement these PD initiatives, I will leverage the strong relationships I have built with administrators across my quadrant. These relationships are crucial as they provide me with the opportunity to gain access to staff during monthly after-school meetings. However, it is crucial to keep in mind that these sessions are non-mandatory under the current Collective Agreement. As such, I will also approach administrators to request time during PD Days, which presents an excellent opportunity for more structured and comprehensive training sessions.

Given the specific agency of my role and my inability to provide funding for release time, the initial PD sessions will be offered and conducted after school hours. However, I would explore the possibility of running these sessions during the school day if an administrator offers the necessary support. My initial focus will be on schools within my designated quadrant, where I aim to increase overall awareness of FASD among all staff members. For educators who have identified students with FASD in their classrooms, I will offer specialized PD sessions that focus on specific strategies tailored to these students' unique needs. These sessions have the potential to improve these students' educational experience significantly, and I hope this potential impact will motivate and commit the educators to the process.

In addition to working directly with educators, I will collaborate closely with paraprofessionals, ensuring that the perspectives of Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Social Workers, and psychologists are considered and fully integrated into the PD sessions. This interdisciplinary approach will help create a more holistic

support system for students with FASD, addressing their diverse needs through a collaborative

and informed effort.

Setting up a Professional Learning Community (PLC) focused on FASD involves

creating a dedicated space for educators to engage in ongoing, collaborative learning centred

around supporting students with FASD. The goal of this PLC is to deepen educators'

understanding of FASD, share evidence-based strategies, and develop practical approaches

tailored to the unique needs of these students. By bringing together teachers, support staff, and

specialists such as Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and Occupational Therapists (OTs), the

PLC will foster a multidisciplinary approach to addressing the challenges faced by students with

FASD. Regular meetings will be scheduled to discuss case studies, share resources, and reflect

on the effectiveness of interventions, ensuring that the learning is continuous and directly

applicable to the classroom setting. This PLC, more than just a platform for professional growth,

will serve as a vital support network for educators, reducing the sense of isolation and providing

a space for shared learning and problem-solving among those committed to improving

educational outcomes for students with FASD.

Leveraging the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT), which includes fellow SERTs, Student

Services Coordinators and Intervention Support Workers, is a critical strategy in ensuring that

there is widespread awareness of professional development and PLC offerings. By engaging this

team, we can effectively communicate the availability and importance of these training sessions

to educators and support staff across the district. The IDT members, with their direct

involvement in supporting students with diverse needs, are uniquely positioned to advocate for

the value of these sessions and encourage participation. Additionally, they can play a crucial role

in facilitating the process by helping to identify educators who would benefit most from targeted

training and by sharing insights on the specific challenges faced within their schools. Through their collaboration, we can ensure that the professional development initiatives are not only well-publicized but also highly relevant and tailored to the needs of those working directly with students with FASD.

This DiP uses Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model as a sequential guide to leading change for students with FASD within the SMDSB (Kotter, 2022). The model is referenced in Chapter 2, Figure 9.

Step 1: Create a Sense of Urgency

The sense of urgency related to improving the academic achievement and well-being of students with FASD is evident when one looks at the prevalence rates of this disability. As mentioned, FASD is one of the leading causes of developmental disability in the Western world, with an estimated 4% of individuals receiving a diagnosis (Flannigan et al., 2018).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission explains that Canada committed cultural genocide against the Indigenous peoples. Cultural genocide is "the destruction of those structures and practices that allow [a] group to continue as a group" (TRC, 2015, p. 1). This cultural genocide included such things as the disempowerment of Indigenous women, denial of the right to political participation, outlawing spiritual practices, and forcible removal of children to residential schools. These atrocities experienced by Indigenous peoples have an established link to increased rates of substance abuse and addiction. The TRC (2015) states that "there is a need to take urgent measures to prevent FASD and better manage its harmful consequences. There is a clear need in Aboriginal communities for more programming that addresses the problems of addiction and FASD" (p. 174).

To create a sense of urgency, I would begin by communicating to colleagues and SMDSB staff the immediate need to address the issues surrounding FASD within the SMDSB. I would highlight the stark statistics and prevalence rates of FASD, emphasizing that this developmental disability affects at least one student in every Kindergarten class, impacting hundreds of students, educators, principals, and families across the district. I would share these statistics through compelling stories and real-life examples that illustrate the daily struggles and long-term consequences faced by students with FASD. Furthermore, I would link these individual experiences to the broader systemic issues highlighted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, such as the ongoing impacts of cultural genocide on Indigenous communities, which have led to higher rates of substance abuse and FASD.

In 2020, the Government of Canada officially recognized September as FASD Awareness Month, highlighting the importance of awareness and education about this condition (CanFASD, 2024). The theme for the 2024 FASD Awareness Month is "Everyone Plays a Part," emphasizing collective responsibility in supporting individuals with FASD. To ensure widespread awareness and participation, I plan to share flyers with schools both electronically and in hardcopy. These flyers will be posted on our internal website and distributed through various channels. Additionally, I will enlist the help of my Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) and Intervention Support Workers (ISW) to maximize outreach and engagement.

Each quadrant receives bi-weekly and monthly email communications from Student Services coordinators, which outline the special education focuses for the month. With the permission of the Superintendent of my quadrant and my Student Services Coordinator, these communications will include dates for professional development workshops and seminars specifically tailored to FASD. By integrating this information into our regular updates, we can

ensure that educators are well-informed and prepared to support students with FASD. This approach will also help in promoting a culture of continuous learning and professional growth within our school district.

To further support this initiative, paraprofessionals who have students with FASD on their caseloads will be involved in the communication process. This includes ensuring that teachers and support staff are aware of and can participate in the HO. Communication about the HO will be primarily conducted via email, providing a convenient and accessible way for all involved parties to stay informed and engaged. This comprehensive strategy will help foster a supportive and collaborative environment for students with FASD across our district.

To reinforce this urgency, I would utilize various communication channels within SMDSB, including email updates, newsletters, and social media platforms, to disseminate these facts and stories consistently. I would schedule formal discussions and presentations during staff meetings, board meetings, and community forums to ensure that all key parties, including educators, administrators, and parents, understand the critical need for immediate action. Leveraging existing relationships with the Superintendent, Student Services Coordinator, and Trustee, I will emphasize the importance of focusing on FASD. Additionally, I will work closely with the principals at the schools I am affiliated with to prioritize FASD awareness and support. By starting this process with the strong relationships I have already established, we can create a solid foundation for success and gradually expand our efforts outward. This strategic approach will help build momentum and ensure that the initiative gains the necessary support and visibility across the entire school district.

Though my agency as a middle leader, I would incorporate sessions within the HO that focus on the importance of addressing FASD, providing educators with the knowledge and tools

they need to support affected students effectively. By creating a widespread awareness and understanding of the urgent need to address FASD, I can help mobilize the community toward implementing the necessary changes to support these students and improve their educational outcomes. I would incorporate the solutions in the hybrid option, Professional Development and PLCS with a Support network, that focus on the importance of addressing FASD, providing educators with the knowledge and tools they need to support affected students effectively. By creating a widespread awareness and understanding of the urgent need to address FASD, I can help mobilize the community toward implementing the necessary changes to support these students and improve their educational outcomes. As the IDT SERT, I have the agency to work with schools to develop professional development and PLCs suited to the needs of the school

Step 2: Build a Guiding Coalition

Forming effective coalitions with appropriate individuals is crucial for the change process (Kotter, 1996). The leading coalition must possess the necessary authority, expertise, and credibility to drive change while also incorporating individuals directly impacted by it.

The guiding collation for this DiP would consist of between 21 and 84 people. This is based on the involvement of a minimum of five schools. As Table 3 below outlines, SMDSB is divided into four geographical quadrants. Each quadrant has an interdisciplinary team (IDT) made up of SERTs, ISWs, Special Education Consultants, Student Services Administrators, and Quadrant Superintendents. Each Interdisciplinary team is also supported by a team of Speech and Language Pathologists, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Social Workers, and Workplace Coordinators. A Quadrant IDT is supporting every school within the SMDSB.

As one of the SERTs in Quadrant 1, I meet with the other 20 people on the team at least once monthly for staff meetings and professional development. In these formal meetings, I can form, guide, and lead a coalition of support for those who support the educators who are working with students with FASD. There is also the opportunity for numerous informal meetings to share the work needed to improve the well-being and achievement of students with FASD. All four quadrants meet at least four times a year, wherein further connections and the creation of a larger guiding collation could occur.

There is also the potential for engaging educators who have students with FASD in their classrooms. Each Quadrant IDT supports the behavioural needs of students within their geographic location. These students are often on IDT caseload, or, at the very least, IDT members are aware of these students. As such, the proposed support groups and professional learning opportunities could also involve these educators. This change implementation plan is aligned with the overall organizational structure of the SMDSB in that those on IDT are already positioned to be a support network and source of professional development for educators in the schools.

To build this coalition, I will start by identifying key individuals within each quadrant, including SERTs, ISWs, Special Education Consultants, and Student Services Administrators. I will reach out to these individuals through formal invitations to join the coalition, emphasizing the critical role they will play in supporting students with FASD. I will also engage Speech and Language Pathologists, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Social Workers, and Workplace Coordinators to ensure a comprehensive support network. During our monthly staff meetings and professional development sessions, I will present the vision and goals of the coalition, highlighting the importance of their expertise and collaboration. Additionally, I

will organize smaller, informal meetings to foster relationships and encourage open

communication among coalition members. By leveraging the existing structure of the SMDSB

and the commitment of dedicated professionals, we can create a solid and effective coalition to

drive meaningful change for students with FASD.

Table 2

Comparison of Staff over Quadrants

	Quadrant 1	Quadrant 2	Quadrant 3	Quadrant 4	Total
SERT	4	4	4	4	16
ISW	10	10	10	10	40
SEC	2	2	2	2	8
SSA	2	2	2	2	8
Quad SO	3	3	3	3	12
	21	21	21	21	84

Note. This table outline the specific roles and numbers of SMDSB employees who can potential

to positively impact students with FASD.

Step 3: Form a Strategic Vision

The third stage in Kotter's 8-Step Change Model entails crafting a vision and strategy.

This encompasses formulating a distinct and captivating vision for the future and a strategy to

realize that vision (Kotter, 1996). SMDSB's, Student Services defines its vision as follows: "We

work to recognize all learners as our learners and work together to ensure the discovery of

potential each and every day" (SMDSB, 2022). However, after working for Student Services for

over three years, the first time this vision was brought to my attention was in a completely unrelated matter. Kotter (1996) addresses this by explaining that change frequently falters when the strategy is formulated behind closed doors without the organization's involvement or when significant obstacles are not acknowledged and addressed. To develop the vision for the change process, I would include a diverse group of parties, including teachers, administrators, support staff, students, and parents. This inclusive approach ensures that the vision reflects the collective aspirations and insights of those directly impacted by the change, thereby fostering more significant commitment and alignment across the organization. Engaging these critical parties from the outset can also help identify and address potential obstacles early in the process, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the strategy.

Step 4: Communicate the Vision

The fourth step in Kotter's 8-Step Change Model is communicating the change vision. This involves communicating the vision and strategy to all those working with students with FASD. Leaders must create a clear and compelling message that resonates with educators and helps them understand the importance of change (Kotter, 1996). One effective way to communicate the change vision is to use multiple channels, such as email, meetings, and social media. Leaders should also provide regular updates on the progress of the change initiatives and address any concerns or questions from educators (Kotter, 1996). Educators within Quadrant 1 who have students with a known diagnosis of FASD will be purposefully engaged through face-to-face contact in order to ensure that these educators feel heard and supported.

To further strengthen the coalition and ensure a comprehensive approach, it is essential to involve teachers and principals actively in the process. Teachers, being on the front lines of education, have firsthand experience with the challenges and needs of students with FASD. By

involving them, we can gather valuable insights and practical solutions that are grounded in daily classroom experiences. I would engage teachers by organizing focus groups, surveys, and workshops where they can share their perspectives and contribute to shaping the vision and strategy. Additionally, professional development sessions are designed to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to support students with FASD effectively.

Principals play a critical role in setting the tone and culture within their schools. Their support and leadership are crucial for the successful implementation of any change initiative. To engage principals, I would hold regular meetings with them to discuss the vision and strategy, address any concerns, and ensure their buy-in. By involving principals in the planning and decision-making processes, we can leverage their leadership to drive the change at the school level and ensure that the vision is communicated effectively to all staff members.

As a middle leader, I leverage my position to bridge the gap between the coalition and the broader school community. I would facilitate communication and collaboration between teachers, principals, support staff, and the Student Services Department. By creating opportunities for dialogue and feedback, I can ensure that everyone's voice is heard and that the strategy is continuously refined based on the input received. I would also lead by example, demonstrating a commitment to the vision and actively participating in professional development and support initiatives.

Ultimately, building a coalition that includes a diverse group of individuals, particularly teachers and principals, is essential for driving meaningful change. By working together, we can develop and implement a strategy that addresses the unique needs of students with FASD and fosters an inclusive and supportive educational environment. This collaborative approach will

ensure that the vision for change is not only compelling but also achievable, with the collective efforts of a committed and empowered coalition working towards the common goal.

To ensure the change process is manageable and effective, I would initially focus on implementing these strategies within one quadrant of the board. By concentrating on Quadrant 1, we can create a pilot program that allows us to refine our approach based on real-world feedback and outcomes. This focused effort will enable us to identify best practices and potential challenges in a controlled environment before scaling the initiative across the entire district. By demonstrating success in Quadrant 1, we can build momentum and gather evidence to support broader implementation, ultimately ensuring that all students with FASD across SMDSB benefit from a well-structured and thoroughly tested change process.

In this implementation of the HO, anyone who voluntarily wants to be involved is welcome to join the coalition. This inclusivity will harness diverse perspectives and a broad range of expertise. I will personally deliver the professional development (PD) sessions, ensuring consistency and a clear message throughout the training. As the IDT SERT, part of my role is to provide professional development support to schools who require it. As such, my schedule allows for time to both plan and deliver Professional Development and support PLCs. Based on collective agreements with support staff and educators, HO sessions could take place voluntarily before or after school. Alternatively, with the support of principals, these sessions can be scheduled during the school day using release time.

The content of the PD will be structured in stages, beginning with laying the groundwork for a deeper understanding of FASD. This initial phase will cover the basics of FASD, including its causes, symptoms, and impacts on learning and behaviour.

Following this foundational stage, the PD will branch into more in-depth strategies for supporting students with FASD. These sessions will include practical classroom strategies, behaviour management techniques, and ways to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. By progressively building on knowledge and skills, the PD will equip educators with the tools they need to effectively support students with FASD, ultimately fostering an environment where these students can thrive.

Step 5: Enable Action by Removing Barriers

The fifth stage in Kotter's 8-Step Change Model is empowering others to execute the vision. This entails eliminating barriers and obstacles that hinder employees from taking action. Leaders must furnish the essential resources, training, and support to empower employees to contribute actively to the change process.

To that end, "professional development can serve as a tool to change attitudes, increase understanding…and increase teachers' self-efficacy. Professional development can be considered a base for inclusive education" (Petersson-Bloom & Holmqvist, 2023, p. 53). Petersson-Bloom & Holmqvist (2023) identified several barriers to change affecting educators, including "lack of time, the physical environment (e.g. lack of group rooms), resources and support from school leaders. Teachers are affected by a lack of resources, which influences the school climate" (p. 64) and this, in turn, influences student well-being. Engaging in professional development can lead to shifts in comprehension and attitudes toward students with FASD, signifying a fundamental change in mindset—a crucial initial step. However, it is essential not to view professional development as a rapid solution. Ongoing support and coaching for educators are imperative to ensure that these transformations are effectively translated into classroom practices (Petersson-Bloom & Holmqvist, 2023). The professional development opportunities will be

structured through an adult learning model whereby educators are encouraged to participate as they have students with FASD in their classrooms.

Step 6: Generate Short Term Wins

The sixth step in Kotter's 8-Step Change Model involves celebrating small successes and showing progress toward the vision. These short-term wins help build momentum and inspire employees to continue the change process (Kotter, 1996). To create short-term wins effectively, it is essential to identify quick wins that can be achieved early in the change process. Additionally, leaders should recognize and reward employees for their contributions to the change.

To achieve short-term wins effectively, SMDSB will focus on identifying and tackling specific, achievable goals that align with the overall vision of this DiP. These short-term wins will include the participation of educators in professional learning about FASD and educators who regularly attend support. Moreover, communicating these wins transparently and regularly helps to maintain momentum and sustain commitment to the change initiative. Celebrating these victories not only boosts morale but also serves as evidence of the change's effectiveness, encouraging continued support and engagement from all key parties (Kotter, 1996).

Step 7: Sustain Acceleration

The seventh stage in Kotter 8-step change model revolves around consolidating gains and fostering further change. This entails capitalizing on the momentum generated by short-term victories and persisting in advancing toward the vision. Leaders must persist in furnishing the required resources and assistance to uphold the change process (Kotter, 1996). An efficient approach to consolidating gains and driving further change is to engage educators actively in the process and encourage them to contribute their insights and feedback. Additionally, leaders

should adapt the strategy as necessary, taking into account feedback and evolving circumstances.

Within the SMDSB, this would involve creating continuous opportunities for professional development and collaborative learning among educators to reinforce the changes for students with FASD. Establishing regular review meetings and open forums for discussion can help maintain transparency and collective ownership of the change process. Leaders could also implement a system for monitoring progress and addressing challenges as they arise, ensuring that all parties remain engaged and informed. Celebrating successes and recognizing the contributions of educators, students, and staff at various stages can sustain motivation and commitment to the long-term vision. Moreover, innovative teaching methods can further support the ongoing adaptation and improvement of the change strategy within the SMDSB.

Step 8: Institute Change

The eighth and concluding step in Kotter's 8-Step Change Model is firmly establishing new approaches within the organization's culture. This entails integrating the changes into the organization's culture and procedures to guarantee their enduring presence. Leaders must ensure that these changes become ingrained in the organization's DNA (Kotter, 1996). Success in changing the attitude towards students with FASD within SMDSB will hinge upon the modification of educators' actions and the sustained benefits derived from these new behaviours over an extended duration. It is only when students with FASD indicate that they feel an increased sense of well-being while at school that this DiP will be considered a success.

In response to the HO and changes in teaching practices, educators will display increased confidence and competence in supporting students with FASD. The benefits of professional development (PD) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with support networks for

students with FASD, as well as for teachers and support staff, have been well-documented. For students with FASD, research indicates that PD and PLCs equip teachers with evidence-based strategies and interventions tailored to their unique needs, leading to improved educational outcomes (Smith & Jones, 2020). Educators can implement individualized education plans (IEPs) more effectively, ensuring each student receives the necessary support (Brown et al., 2021). Furthermore, a better understanding of FASD allows for the creation of more inclusive and supportive classroom environments, enhancing students' social interactions and emotional health (Williams, 2022). Consistent application of strategies across classrooms and schools has been shown to create a stable learning environment crucial for their success (Johnson, 2023).

For teachers and support staff, PD and PLCs increase their knowledge and skills, providing ongoing education and training on FASD and effective teaching methods (Doe, 2020). These communities foster collaboration, allowing educators to share experiences, resources, and strategies, which offers mutual support and reduces isolation (Lee & Kim, 2021). Engaging in continuous learning and development contributes to professional growth, job satisfaction, and career advancement (Green, 2022). Moreover, understanding FASD helps educators manage classroom behaviors more effectively, creating a positive and productive learning environment for all students (Patel, 2023). Overall, PD and PLCs with support networks promote a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration, ultimately leading to a more inclusive, effective, and supportive educational environment for students with FASD and their educators (Adams, 2024).

They will actively incorporate new strategies and tools into their daily instruction, reflecting a deepened understanding and commitment to inclusive practices. Participation in ongoing professional development sessions and workshops will become routine, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Additionally, forming and participating in

support groups will become a standard part of their professional learning, providing a platform for sharing experiences and best practices. This collaborative environment will help sustain the momentum of change and ensure that the new approaches become a permanent fixture in the educational landscape.

Timeline

The timeline for this DiP, as outlined in Figure 11, provides a structured approach to implementing change over the 2024-2025 academic period, allowing for adequate planning, execution, and reinforcement of the change initiative. This timeline outlines the short-, medium-, and long-term steps required to implement this plan.

Figure 11

Change Implementation Timeline
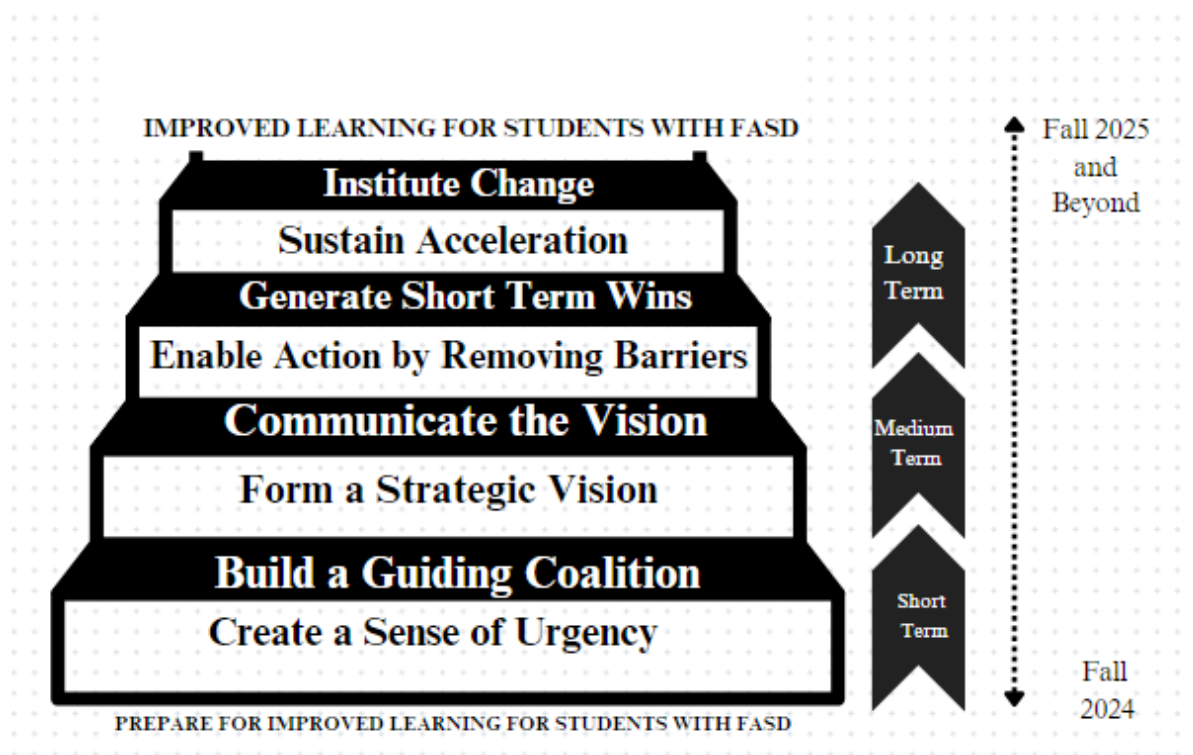
Note. Figure 11 is adapted from the IRIS Center (2024) to reflect the phases of this DiP.

Implementing change within the educational framework of SMDSB, especially to support students with FASD, is likely to face particular limitations and challenges. One anticipated challenge is resistance from educators who may be hesitant to alter their established teaching methods. To address this, comprehensive professional development programs and PLCs with support networks, will be designed to demonstrate the efficacy and benefits of new strategies using real-world scenarios, coupled with ongoing support and resources to facilitate the transition. Another potential limitation is the lack of time for teachers to engage in additional training and collaborative planning. To mitigate this, the implementation plan will include structured time within the school schedule for professional development and peer collaboration. Additionally, there might be budgetary constraints; however, securing funding through grants and reallocating existing resources will be crucial to ensuring the sustainability of

these initiatives. This reassurance about the availability of resources aims to instill confidence in the audience about the feasibility of the change process.

Engaging all interested parties, especially those whose voices have traditionally been missing, is vital for the success of the change planning. This includes involving parents, students, and community members in decision-making to ensure their perspectives and needs are addressed. Regular focus groups and surveys will be conducted to gather input from these key parties, ensuring their voices are heard and valued. Special attention will be given to involving marginalized groups to ensure equity and inclusion are at the forefront of the change process. Educators, support staff, and administrators will be engaged through transparent communication and opportunities to contribute to the planning and implementation phases. Reactions to change will be monitored through feedback mechanisms, and adjustments will be made to address concerns and enhance the overall effectiveness of the change initiative. By fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment, the change process will be more robust and widely accepted, leading to a more supportive and practical educational experience for students with FASD.

Communication and Knowledge Mobilization

Effective communication is essential for successfully implementing change initiatives within an organization. A well-structured communication plan helps mitigate resistance, rally support, and maintain enthusiasm throughout the change process. This plan will follow the four phases outlined by Deszca et al. (2020): pre-change approval, building the case for change, managing changes as they occur, and communicating milestones while celebrating successes.

Communication Plan

Effectively communicating the initiatives will play a pivotal role in mitigating the impact of naysayers, rallying support for change, and maintaining enthusiasm and commitment over time (Deszca et al. 2020). Deszca et al. (2020) explain that a communication plan consists of four phases: pre-change approval, building the case for change, managing changes as they occur, and communicating milestones while confirming and celebrating the success of the change.

For this DiP, the above phases will be followed. In the approval phase, I will emphasize the need for change and motivate educators and leaders who work with students with FASD. This will be done through conversations, meetings, and via electronic means such as e-mail and postings on the school board's interweb.

Building the case for change involves creating a compelling narrative that underscores the necessity and benefits of the proposed changes. This will be communicated through detailed presentations, data-driven reports, and testimonials from key parties who have witnessed the positive impact of these changes elsewhere. Regular workshops and information sessions will also be conducted to provide a platform for dialogue and to address any concerns or questions. Managing changes as they occur requires a dynamic communication strategy that keeps all parties informed about the progress and any adjustments being made. This will be achieved through regular updates via newsletters, virtual town halls, and a dedicated online portal where key parties can track developments and provide feedback.

Communicating milestones while confirming and celebrating the success of the change is essential for maintaining momentum and reinforcing the positive outcomes of the initiative. Each milestone will be highlighted and celebrated through school-wide announcements and recognition events, and success stories will be showcased in newsletters and on the school board's website. These celebrations acknowledge the hard work and dedication of those involved

and inspire continued commitment and engagement from the broader school community. By effectively communicating throughout these phases, the change initiative will be more transparent, inclusive, and supported, ultimately leading to a successful transformation in the educational practices for students with FASD.

Knowledge Mobilization

Knowledge mobilization refers to bridging the gap between academic research and real world applications through various groups such as organizations, individuals, and governmental bodies to enhance programs and influence policy. This involves a collaborative process of establishing connections and can be instigated by either the researcher or the entity seeking to implement research findings (University of Winnipeg, n.d.). Lavis et al.'s (2003) framework for knowledge mobilization includes determining the message, audience, messenger, processes, and evaluation. Further, this "framework provides an overall approach to knowledge transfer that can be evaluated as a whole over long periods, as well as specific elements that can be evaluated and fine-tune over shower periods" (Lavis et al., 2003, p. 221).

Message

The first Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) question posed by Lavis et al. (2003) is "What should be transferred to decision makers (the message)?" (p. 222). Further, it is explained that "over long periods, 'ideas' enlighten decision makers about a particular issue and how to hand it" (Lavis et al., 2003, p. 223). It is vital to remember that "someone needs to tell decision-makers about solutions" (p. 224). The core message for improving academic achievement and well-being for students emphasizes the importance of evidence-based practices, collaborative efforts, and inclusive environments. This message advocates for tailored interventions that address diverse learning needs, fostering a holistic approach to student development. Special attention must be

given to Indigenous students and women, addressing historical and ongoing stigmatization by promoting culturally responsive pedagogy and gender-sensitive strategies. Highlighting success stories and data-driven outcomes can help convey the effectiveness of these approaches to decision-makers. By ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups are included in the conversation, we can work towards equitable and just educational practices that benefit all students.

Audience

The second KMb question posed by Lavis et al. (2003) is "To whom should research knowledge be transferred (the target audience)?" (p. 222). A message's target audience must be identified. The specifics of a knowledge-transfer strategy must be fine-tuned to the types of decisions the key audience faces and the types of decision-making environments in which they live or work (Lavis et al., 2003). Further, it is essential to note that "multiple audience-specific messages are needed" (p. 224). When determining the recipients of research knowledge, one must start by identifying those who can directly utilize it. Next, who influences to persuade these individuals should be considered. Finally, one must prioritize the target audiences based on their receptiveness and tailor messages to their specific needs and interests (Lavis et al., 2003).

Educators, school administrators, and policymakers are critical audiences for sharing this change process information. Educators need practical insights and strategies to implement changes in the classroom effectively. School administrators must understand the change process comprehensively to provide adequate support and resources, while policymakers need evidence-based data to advocate for and implement broader educational reforms.

Messenger

The third KMb question to ask is "by whom should research knowledge be transferred (the messenger)?" (Lavis et al., 2003, p. 222). Lavis et al. (2003) quote Shonkoff as explaining that "the credibility of the messenger delivering the message – whether the messenger is an individual, group, or organization – is important to successful knowledge-transfer interventions but has never been tested' (p. 225). Building credibility and acting as a messenger can be very time-consuming and skill-intensive, making it impossible to use a one-size-fits-all approach to decide who should act as the messenger (Lavis et al., 2003).

As the primary messenger, I will leverage my experience and credibility within the SMDSB and the Special Education team to advocate for and communicate the change process. I can share insights and strategies directly with educators and administrators by actively engaging in professional development sessions, meetings, and workshops. Additionally, other Special Education team members can act as messengers by sharing their specialized knowledge and experiences through collaborative meetings and peer mentoring. School principals and critical leaders within SMDSB can also support this effort by disseminating information through official channels and fostering a culture of open communication and continuous improvement. By creating a network of credible messengers, we can ensure that the message is consistently reinforced and embraced across all levels of the organization.

Knowledge-Transfer Processes

A fourth KMb question that requires asking is "how should research knowledge be transferred (the knowledge-transfer processes and supporting communications infrastructure)?" (Lavis et al., 2003, p. 222). Further, we need to consider that "interactive engagement may be most effective, regardless of the audience" (p. 226) when tackling this fourth question. Thus, I will utilize various strategies and communication channels to effectively transfer knowledge

from this change process. Interactive workshops and training sessions would be essential for engaging educators and providing hands-on experience with new strategies. Regular newsletters and updates via email and the school board's intranet can keep all key parties informed of progress and upcoming events. Additionally, virtual forums and discussion boards can facilitate ongoing dialogue and peer support, while webinars and video tutorials provide flexible, on-demand learning opportunities. By employing these diverse communication channels, we can ensure that the knowledge transfer is comprehensive, accessible, and engaging for all involved.

Evaluation

The final question that must be asked in the KMb process is "with what effect should research knowledge be transferred (evaluation)?" (Lavis et al., 2003, p. 222). Further, it is important to keep in mind that "performance measures for knowledge transfer should be appropriate to the target audience and the objectives" (p. 227).

To determine if sharing and transferring knowledge assists teachers and leaders, I will collect feedback through surveys and focus groups to assess their understanding and application of the new strategies. Additionally, tracking changes in teaching practices and classroom management through observations and peer reviews will provide insight into the practical implementation of shared knowledge. Regularly reviewing student performance data and teacher self-assessments will help gauge the overall impact on teaching efficacy and confidence.

Improved outcomes for students with FASD can be measured by monitoring their academic progress, engagement levels, and behavioral improvements over time. Specifically, tracking individualized education plan (IEP) goals and student well-being surveys will offer tangible evidence of positive changes. Furthermore, qualitative data from student, parent, and

teacher testimonials will provide a comprehensive view of the enhancements in the educational experiences and outcomes for students with FASD.

Student Voice

Integrating student voices into the communication and knowledge mobilization plan is essential for creating a comprehensive and inclusive approach to change initiatives within the SMDSB. Including the perspectives of students, particularly those with FASD, ensures that the strategies and interventions developed are directly informed by their experiences and needs, making the change process more relevant and effective.

In the pre-change approval phase, I will gather input from students with FASD through surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews. These conversations will help build the case for change by highlighting the real-world challenges and successes these students face. Sharing their stories and insights with educators and leaders will create a compelling narrative that underscores the necessity and benefits of the proposed changes. To build the case for change, detailed presentations and data-driven reports will include testimonials and direct quotes from students with FASD. This approach will personalize the data and make the narrative more impactful. Regular workshops and information sessions could also feature student panels, where students can share their experiences and suggestions for improvement. This direct engagement will help educators and administrators understand the lived realities of students with FASD and the urgent need for change.

As changes are implemented, maintaining an open line of communication with students will be crucial. Regular updates via newsletters, virtual town halls, and a dedicated online portal, such as a google classroom, will include sections where students can voice their feedback and suggestions. This communication strategy will ensure that the students' perspectives are

continuously integrated into the change process, allowing for real-time adjustments based on their input. Celebrating milestones and successes should also prominently feature student voices. School-wide announcements and recognition events will highlight student achievements and improvements, showcasing success stories in newsletters and on the school board's website. These celebrations will not only acknowledge the hard work of educators and support staff but also the resilience and progress of the students themselves, reinforcing their role in the change process and maintaining momentum.

In the knowledge mobilization phase, the core message of improving academic achievement and well-being for students with FASD will be enriched by the inclusion of student voices. Highlighting success stories and data-driven outcomes from the students' perspectives will convey the effectiveness of these approaches to decision-makers. Ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups, particularly students with FASD, are included in the conversation will promote equitable and just educational practices. Evaluating the impact of the change initiatives will also involve gathering feedback from students. Surveys and focus groups will assess their understanding and experiences with the new strategies. Tracking changes in student performance, engagement levels, and behavior improvements over time will provide tangible evidence of positive changes. Qualitative data from student testimonials will offer a comprehensive view of the enhancements in their educational experiences and outcomes.

By incorporating student voice at every stage of the communication and knowledge mobilization plan, we can ensure that the change initiatives are not only well-informed and relevant but also inclusive and supportive of the students they aim to benefit. This approach will foster a more engaged and empowered student community, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable improvements in educational practices for students with FASD.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to address the knowledge and best practices gaps among SMDSB staff regarding their understanding of FASD, a change must occur. Deming's PDSA Cycle (Plan-Do-Study-Act) will be utilized to monitor and evaluate the impact of the change process. The W. Edwards Deming Institute (2023) defines Deming's PDSA Cycle as a "systematic process for gaining valuable learning and knowledge for the continual improvement of a product, process, or service." The PDSA cycle has four steps: plan, do, study and act (The W. Edwards Deming Institute, 2023; Laverentz & Kumm, 2017; Leis & Shojania, 2016; Reed & Card, 2015; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2017). Expanding upon this, Laverentz & Kumm (2017) explain the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle as "four steps: 1) Plan a small change based on evaluation data, 2) Do or implement the change, 3) Study (check) to see if the change had the desired effect using qualitative and quantitative measures, and 4) Act to standardize the new process or implement a new change" (p. 288).

The primary factor influencing the use of the PDSA is that its intended purpose is "learning and informed action" (Reed & Card, 2015, p. 147). The main reason for using the PDSA is that it allows for and expects rapid and frequent change, as needed, at each phase of the cycle (Leis & Shojania, 2016). Further, a benefit of the PDSA cycle is that it allows for quick determination of whether the proposed solution meets its intended needs and whether or not adjustments are required (Reed & Card, 2015). This approach will assist in monitoring the change process by providing a structured framework to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of professional development sessions and the support group.

By systematically assessing and refining these components, we can ensure they are meeting the needs of educators and contributing to the desired improvements in teaching

practices and student outcomes. A limitation in using the PDSA cycle is that there is a tendency for those implementing a change to perseverate at a specific stage of a cycle and fail to progress through the phases (Reed & Card, 2015). It is essential to remember that progression through the phases of the PDSA is rarely linear (Leis & Shojania, 2016; Reed & Card, 2015;). Further, "double-loop learning may lead to revised goals, as well as revised interventions, and requires significant oversight to manage emergent learning and coordination of PDSA activities over time" (Reed & Card, 2015, p. 151). With this in mind, a solid plan for monitoring and evaluating a change process is essential for ensuring the success and sustainability of the initiative. (Gage & Dunn, 2010; Neumann et al., 2018; Sportanddev.org, n.d.; Virtual Knowledge Centre, 2010; Wagle, 2017;).

The "Plan" phase of the FASD professional development will consist of planning opportunities for various SMDSB employees to participate in learning tailored to their specific role in educating students with FASD. The "Do" phase will deliver the designed professional development programs and establish the support groups. The "Study" phase will use the data collected from surveys to determine if there has been an improvement in the knowledge gap regarding FASD. The "Act" stage will consist of redeveloping the existing professional development and expanding existing professional development that delves deeper into the learning needs of students with FASD.

Frankel and Gage (2016) explain that "monitoring usually pertains to counting, tracking, and collecting" (p. 2). Within the context of SMDSB, this will take the form of counting the number of employees trained in FASD best practices, tracking participation, collecting data on changes in attitudes and understanding, and applying knowledge gained to real-life classroom situations. Ideally, the initial PDSA cycle will take one academic year, with a second cycle

beginning the following year.

As referenced in Figure 12, in Tichnor-Wagner et al. (2017, p. 469), the repeated use of

the PDSA cycle and the learning from the data collected through continuous monitoring and

evaluation at each stage will lead to system-wide improvements in the knowledge and

understanding of the educational and social-emotional needs of students with FASD.

Figure 12

PDSA Cycle – Repeated Use
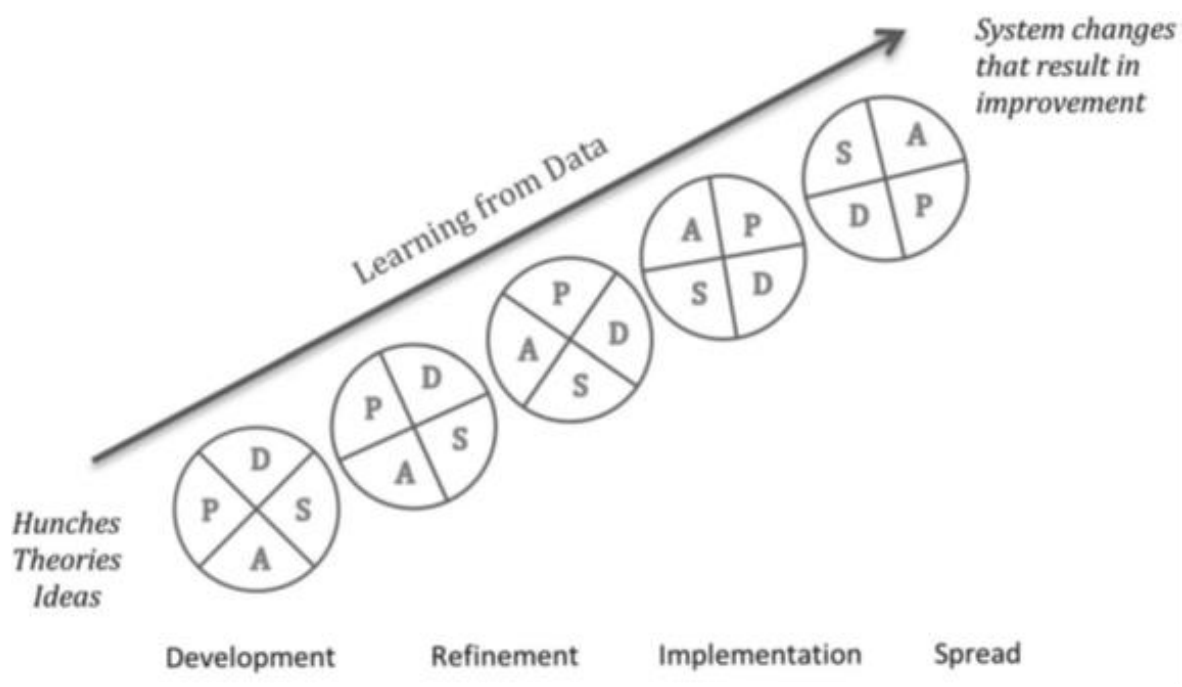
Note. This figure illustrates the repeated movement through the PDSA cycle as referenced by in

Tichnor-Wagner et al. (2017).

Throughout each phase of the PDSA cycle, surveys will be conducted to ensure that

professional development goals are being met. This will help ensure that the intended outcomes

are also being met. Interviews with participants will also be arranged so that further feedback

will be received at each phase. Dialoguing with participants will allow for examining issues that

may still need to be addressed in surveys. To ensure successful monitoring and evaluation of the professional development initiative, the following questions will be asked in each cycle "Was the program implemented as planned? Did the target population benefit from the program, and at what cost? Can improved… outcomes be attributed to program efforts? Which program activities were more effective and which less effective?" (Frankel & Gage, 2017, p. 3). The answers to these questions and others will create opportunities for further improvement, not only for the professional development initiative but also for the overall learning experience of students with FASD.

To answer these questions, data will be collected through various means. Surveys will be filled out by teachers, principals, support staff, and students participating in the professional development programs and support groups. These surveys will measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding FASD. The purpose of these surveys is to gather quantitative and qualitative data on the effectiveness of the training and support provided. Interviews with participants will provide deeper insights and allow for more nuanced feedback that surveys might miss.

The data collected will inform the next steps in the PDSA cycle. If the data indicates that the professional development programs have successfully improved understanding and practices regarding FASD, the changes will be standardized and implemented more broadly. If the data shows areas needing improvement, the professional development programs will be redeveloped and refined to better meet the needs of educators and students. This iterative process ensures that the change initiative is continuously evolving and improving based on real-time feedback and data.

To determine if the plan is successful, several indicators will be measured. These include the number of employees trained, changes in attitudes and understanding of FASD, the application of knowledge in classroom settings, and improvements in student outcomes such as academic performance, engagement levels, and behavior. Success will be determined by comparing these indicators before and after the implementation of the professional development programs. Regular monitoring and evaluation will provide the information needed to assess the effectiveness of the change plan and make necessary adjustments to ensure its success. This detailed plan will ensure that the change process is dynamic, responsive, and effective in improving educational practices for students with FASD.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

Moving forward, it is crucial to establish a comprehensive framework that addresses the unique needs of students with FASD. This involves creating tailored educational plans that incorporate evidence-based strategies and accommodations. Educators and administrators should receive ongoing professional development to stay updated on the latest research and best practices in FASD education. Furthermore, fostering a collaborative environment where teachers, parents, and specialists work together is essential to ensure a cohesive approach to supporting these students.

Another vital step is the implementation of regular assessments and evaluations to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the strategies employed. This continuous feedback loop will allow for timely adjustments and improvements to the educational plans, ensuring that they remain relevant and effective. Additionally, schools should consider integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) programs that cater to the specific emotional and behavioral challenges

faced by students with FASD. These programs can help build resilience, self-regulation, and positive relationships, contributing to overall well-being.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action highlight the importance of addressing the needs of students with FASD, particularly within Indigenous communities. Engaging with policymakers to create supportive legislation and funding initiatives can provide the necessary resources for schools to implement and sustain these programs. Raising public awareness about FASD and its impact on education can also garner community support and reduce stigma, paving the way for a more inclusive and understanding educational environment. The TRC Calls to Action advocate for increased support and resources for FASD prevention, diagnosis, and education, which are essential steps toward achieving these goals.

Authors Deszca, Ingols, and Cawsey, in their text *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit* (2020), write, in reference to change, "the truth is - the cavalry is not coming! There will be no cavalry charging over the hill to save us. It is up to us to make the changes needed" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 5). Avery and students with FASD need that people to step up and make these changes. The cavalry is not coming, but educators supporting students with FASD can, and must, make the necessary changes within the system to provide these students with an education that best meets their specific needs. Increased understanding and awareness, change to program delivery and implementation, improvement of best practices, and consistent and diligent monitoring and evaluation will lead to better educational, well-being, and life outcomes for all students diagnosed with FASD. At the core of this DiP is the message "Whatever you do, make a difference with it" (Zohar, 2005, p. 48), a message that is profoundly needed when advocating for change in the education of Avery and students with FASD.

References

Achieng-Evensen, C., Stockbridge, K., & SooHoo, S. (2022). *Freirean echoes: Scholars and practitioners dialogue on critical ideas in Education*. Myers Education Press.

Adams, L. (2024). Promoting inclusive and supportive educational environments through PD and PLCs. *International Journal of Education*, 32(1), 44-58.

Alford, B. (2002). Freirean voices, student choices. *Pedagogy*, *2*(1), 115–118. https://doi.org/10.1215/15314200-2-1-115

Appelbaum, S. H., Habashy, S., Malo, J. & Shafiq, H. (2012). Back to the future: Revisiting Kotter's 1996 change model. *Journal of Management Development*, *31*(8), 764-782. https://doi.org/10.1108/02621711211253231

Armstrong, E. M. (1998). Diagnosing moral disorder: The discovery and evolution of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. *Social Science & Medicine, 46(12),* 2025-2042. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(98)00308-6

The Association for Bright Children of Ontario. (n.d.). *ABC Ontario*. https://www.abcontario.ca/

Azmat, A., & Masta, S. (2021). Power, positionality, and purpose: Employing Indigenous methods as a non-Indigenous scholar. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *34*(10), 974–987. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2021.1930263

Banerji, A., & Shah, C. (2017). Ten-year experience of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder; Diagnostic and resource challenges in Indigenous children. *Paediatrics & Child Health*, *22*(3), 143–147. https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxx052

Blagg, H., Tulich, T., Williams, R., Stewart, M., Badry, D., Edward May, S., & Mutch, R. (2021). *Decolonising justice for Aboriginal youth with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders*. Routledge Ltd.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2017). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*.

John Wiley & Sons.

Boys, C. J., Bjorke, J., Dole, K. N., Dalnes, C., Terwey, S., & Chang, P.-N. (2016). Improving educational outcomes in fetal alcohol spectrum disorder through interagency collaboration. *Journal of Pediatric Neuropsychology*, *2*(1–2), 50–57. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40817-016-0011-2

Brett, K., Harding, K., & Family Advisory Committee. (2018). *CANFASD issue paper: Current strategies and educational supports for students with FASD*. Canada FASD Research Network. https://preventionconversation.org/wpcontent/uploads/2022/12/FASDEducation-Issue-Paper-Final.pdf

Brown, C., Davis, L., & Thompson, M. (2021). Implementing individualized education plans for students with FASD. *Special Education Quarterly*, 27(3), 45-57.

Brown, C., White, R., & Kelly, A. (2021). Teachers as educational change agents: What do we currently know? Findings from a systematic review. *Emerald Open Research*, *3* (26). https://doi.org/10.35241/emeraldopenres.14385.1

Brown, J. M., Bland, R., Jonsson, E. & Greenshaw, A. J. (2019). A brief history of awareness of the link between alcohol and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, *64*(3), 164-168. https://doi.org/10.1177/0706743718777403

Burnes, B. (2004). Kurt Lewin and the planned approach to change: A re-appraisal. *Journal of Management Studies*, *41*(6), 977–1002. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2004.00463.x

Cameron, E., & Green, M. (2024). *Making sense of change management: A complete guide to the models, tools and techniques of organizational change*. Kogan Page.

Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network. (2021). *Canada fetal alcohol spectrum disorder research network*. CanFASD. https://canfasd.ca/

Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network. (2019). Public definition of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). CanFASD. https://canfasd.ca/

Carrington, S., Park, E., McKay, L., Saggers, B., Harper-Hill, K., & Somerwil, T. (2024). Evidence of transformative leadership for inclusive practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *141*, 104466. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104466

Casañ, M. J., Alier, M., & Llorens, A. (2021). A collaborative learning activity to analyze the sustainability of an innovation using pestle. *Sustainability*, *13*(16), 8756. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13168756

CFA Institute. (2023). *Giving voice to values: Values-based leadership training*. CFA Institute. https://www.cfainstitute.org/en/ethics-standards/ethics/giving-voice-to-values

Chudley, A. E. (2018). Diagnosis of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: Current practices and future considerations. *Biochemistry and Cell Biology*, *96*, 231–236. https://doi.org/10.1139/bcb-2017-0106

Chudley, A. E., Conry, J., Cook, J. L., Loock, C., Rosales, T., & LeBlanc, N. (2005). Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: Canadian guidelines for diagnosis. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, *172*(5), S1-S21. https://www.cmaj.ca/content/cmaj/172/5_suppl/s1.full.pdf

CioPages - Staff Writer. (2023, February 25). *Top ten change management models for enterprise transformation*. CioPages. https://www.ciopages.com/change-management-models/

Cohen, A. R., & Bradford, D. L. (2005). The influence mode: Using reciprocity and exchange to get what you need. *Journal of Organizational Excellence*. 25(1), 57-80.

https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.20080

Cohen, A. R., & Bradford, D. L. (2017). *Influence without authority*. Wiley.

Corrigan, P. W., Lara, J. L., Shah, B. B., Mitchell, K. T., Simmes, D., & Jones, K. L. (2017). The public stigma of birth mothers of children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, *41*(6), 1166–1173. https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.13381

Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T.F., (2019). *Organizational change: An action-oriented toolkit*. SAGE Publications.

Duke University. (n.d.). *Module 5: Alcohol and babies?!?* The Alcohol Pharmacology Education Partnership. https://sites.duke.edu/apep/module-5-alcohol-and-babies/

Eaton, S. (2020). *4M framework*. Learning, Teaching and Leadership. https://drsaraheaton.wordpress.com/tag/4m-framework/#:~:text=The%204M%20framework%20frames%20integrity,%2C%204M%20framework%2C%20systems%20theory.

Edmonds, K., & Crichton, S. (2008). Finding ways to teach to students with FASD: A research study. *International Journal of Special Education, 23*(1), 54-73. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ814375

Edmonton and Area Fetal Alcohol Network Society. (January 2023). *Edmonton and area fetal alcohol network society*. https://edmontonfetalalcoholnetwork.org/

Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (ERLC). (2023). *Supporting students with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders*: *Engaging all learners.* https://www.engagingalllearners.ca/il/supporting-students-with-fasd/

Edwards-Groves, C., Grootenboer, P., & Ronnerman, K. (2016). Facilitating a culture of

relational trust in school-based action research: Recognising the role of middle leaders. *Educational Action Research*, *24*(3), 369–386. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2015.1131175

FASD Ontario. (2022, November 29). *FASD Ontario*. https://fasdinfotsaf.ca/

Flannigan, K., Unsworth, K., & Harding, K., (2018). The prevalence of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. *Canada FASD Research Network.* https://canfasd.ca/wp content/uploads/publications/Prevalence-1-Issue-Paper-FINAL.pdf

Frankel, N., & Gage, A. (2016). M&E fundamentals: A self-guided mini course. *Measure Evaluation.* www.measureevaluation.org/resources/publications/ms-07-20- en/at_download/document

Frederiksen, N., & Nissinen, N. M. (2022). How to strengthen the focus on children affected by prenatal alcohol exposure to help them lead a good life? *Nordic Welfare Centre*. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.52746/KDWR1322

Freire, P. (2005). *Education for critical consciousness*. Continuum. https://abahlali.org/files/Paulo%20Freire%20Education%20for%20Critical%20Consciou sness%20Continuum%20Impacts%20%202005.pdf

Freire, P., & Bergman Ramos, M. (2007b). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: 30th anniversary edition*. Continuum.

Fullan, M. (1993). Why teachers must become change agents. *Educational Leadership, 50*, 12-17. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://michaelfullan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/13396031680.pdf

Fullan, M. (2016). The elusive nature of whole system improvement in education. *Journal of Educational Change, 17*, 539-544. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-016-9289-1

Fullan, M. (2001). Whole school reform: Problems and promises. *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto*. michaelfullan.ca/13396044810.pdf

Gage, A., & Dunn, M. (2010). *Monitoring and evaluating gender-based violence prevention and mitigation programs: A facilitator's training guide.* MEASURE Evaluation, USAID, IGWG.

Gilley, A., Dixon, P., & Gilley, J. W. (2008). Characteristics of leadership effectiveness: Implementing change and driving innovation in organizations. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 19*(2), 153-169. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.1232

Green, E. (2022). Continuous learning and professional growth in education. *Journal of Professional Development*, 30(3), 65-79.

Hargreaves, A., & Shirley, D. (2019). Leading from the middle: Its nature, origins and importance. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, *5*(1), 92–114. https://doi.org/10.1108/jpcc-06-2019-0013

Healthy Child Manitoba & Manitoba Education and Training. (2018). *What educators need to know about FASD: Working together to educate children in Manitoba with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.* https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/fasd/

Hicks, K. (2022). *Top 8 change management models: A comparison guide*. Zendesk. https://www.zendesk.com/blog/change-management-models/

Hughes, M. (2011). Do 70 per cent of all organizational change initiatives really fail? *Journal of Change Management*, *11*(4), 451–464. https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2011.630506

Hunting, G., & Browne, A. (n.d.). *Decolonizing policy discourse: Reframing the "problem" of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder*. https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/32417/1/11.1_Hunting_Browne.pdf

IRIS Centre. (2024). *What model can school leaders use to guide the change necessary for creating inclusive school environments?* https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/inc/cresource/q2/p04/#content

Jhangiani, R. S., Chiang, I.-C. A., Cuttler, C., & Leighton, D. C. (2019). *Observational research*. Research Methods in Psychology. https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/psychmethods4e/chapter/observational-research/

Johnston, S., & Boyle, J. (2012). Northern British Columbian Aboriginal mothers: Raising adolescents with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*. *24*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659612452006

Johnson, P. (2023). Consistency in educational strategies for FASD: A key to success. *Journal of Educational Practice*, 14(4), 201-213.

Jongens, T. (2017). Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis and schooling: A tale of two boys and differing discourses. *Kairaranga*, *18*(1), 25–27. https://doi.org/10.54322/kairaranga.v18i1.216

Kautz-Turnbull, C., & Petrenko, C. (2021). A Meta-analytic review of adaptive functioning in fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, and the effect of IQ, executive functioning, and age. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, *45*(12), 2430–2447. https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.14728

Kotter International Inc. (2022). *The 8-step process for leading change: Dr. John Kotter*. Kotter International Inc. https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/

Lange, S., Shield, K., Rehml, J., Anagnostou, E., & Popova, S. (2019). Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: Neurodevelopmentally and behaviorally indistinguishable from other neurodevelopmental disorders. *BMC Psychiatry*. *19*(322), 1-

10. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-019-2289-y

Lange, S., Probst, C., Gmel, G., Rehm, J., Burd, L., & Popova, S. (2017). Global prevalence of

fetal alcohol spectrum disorder among children and Youth. *JAMA Pediatrics*, *171*(10),

948. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2017.1919

Lambert, L. (2007). Lasting leadership: Toward sustainable school improvement. *Journal of

Educational Change, 8*(4), 311–322. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-007-9046-6

Laverentz, D., & Kumm, S. (2017). Concept evaluation using the PDSA cycle for continuous

quality improvement. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, *38*(5), 288–290.

https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NEP.0000000000000161

Layden, S. J., Lorio-Barsten, D., Scott, L. A., & Hayden, K. E. (2023). Perceptions of 10 special

education administrators on professional development for educators working with

students with ASD. *Exceptionality: The Official Journal of the Division for Research of

the Council for Exceptional Children, 31*(2), 102–117.

https://doi.org/10.1080/09362835.2022.2100390

Lee, S., & Kim, H. (2021). Collaboration and support in professional learning communities.

Education and Society, 18(2), 112-126.

Lees, B., Elliott, E. J., Allsop, S., Thomas, S., Riches, J., Nepal, S., Rice, L. J., Newton, N.,

Mewton, L., Teesson, M., & Stapinski, L. A. (2021). Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder

resources for educators working within primary school settings: A scoping review

protocol. *BMJ Open*, *11*(4). https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-045497

Leis, J., & Shojania, K. (2017). A primer on PDSA: Executing plan-do-study-act cycles in

practice, not just in name. *BMJ Quality and Safety*, *26*, 572-577.

https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjqs-2016-006245

Louie, D. W., & Prince, L. (2023). Achieving equity in graduation rates and other indicators of success for Indigenous learners in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Education/ Revue Canadienne De L'education, 46(1),* 1-32. https://doi.org/10.53967/cje-rce.5493

Makela, M. L., Pei, J. R., Kerns, K. A., MacSween, J. V., Kapasi, A., & Rasmussen, C. (2019). Teaching children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder to use metacognitive strategies. *The Journal of Special Education*, *53*(2), 119–128. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466919832371

Manitoba Education and Training & Healthy Child Manitoba. (2018). *What educators need to know about FASD: Working together to educate children in Manitoba with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.* https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/fasd/pubs/fasdeducators_en.pdf

May, P. A., Chambers, C. D., Kalberg, W. O., Zellner, J., Feldman, H., Buckley, D., Kopald, D., Hasken, J. M., Xu, R., Honerkamp-Smith, G., Taras, H., Manning, M. A., Robinson, L. K., Adam, M. P., Abdul-Rahman, O., Vaux, K., Jewett, T., Elliott, A. J., Kable, J. A., … Hoyme, H. E. (2018a). Prevalence of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in 4 US communities. *JAMA*, *319*(5), 474. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2017.21896

McPheat, S. (2023). *Putting Kotter's 8-step change model into action: MTD training*. Leadership and Management Training Courses. MTD Training. https://www.mtdtraining.com/blog/kotters-8-step-change-model.htm

Millians, M. N. (2015). Educational needs and care of children with FASD. *Current Developmental Disorders Reports*, *2*(3), 210–218. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40474-015-0055-5

Millar, J. A., Thompson, J., Schwab, D., Hanlon-Dearman, A., Goodman, D., Koren, G., & Masotti, P. (2014). Educating students with FASD: Linking policy, research and practice.

Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, *17*(1), 3–17.

https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12090

Miller, K. (2019). *How to influence without authority in the workplace.* Harvard Business School

Online. https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/influence-without-authority

Neumann, J., Robson, A., & Sloan, D. (2018). Monitoring and evaluation of strategic change

programme implementation: Lessons from a case analysis. *Evaluation and Program*

Planning, *66*, 120-132. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2017.09.012

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2017). *Special education in Ontario, kindergarten to grade 12:*

Policy and resource guide. https://www.ontario.ca/document/special-education-ontario-

policy-and-resource-guide-kindergarten-grade-12

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2021). Special Education Advisory Committees.

https://www.ontario.ca/page/special-education-advisory-committees

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013). *Learning for all: A guide to effective assessment and*

instruction for all students, Kindergarten to Grade 12.

https://www.ontario.ca/page/learning-all-guide-effective-assessment-and-instruction-all-

students-kindergarten-grade-12

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2017). *Special Education in Ontario: Kindergarten to Grade 12*

– Policy and Resource Guide.

https://www.ontario.ca/document/special-education-kindergarten-grade-12

Opini, B. (2019). Inclusive education as exclusive practice: One parent's experience advocating

for children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders within the school system.

Exceptionality Education International, *29*(2), 72–90.

https://doi.org/10.5206/eei.v29i2.9403

Palmeter, S., Probert, A., & Lagacé, C. (2021). FASD prevalence among children and

    youth: Results from the 2019 Canadian health survey on children and youth. *Health*

    Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention in Canada, *41*(9), 272–

    276. https://doi.org/10.24095/hpcdp.41.9.05

Patel, N. (2023). Managing classroom behaviors: Strategies for teachers of students with FASD.

    Behavioral Education Journal, 22(2), 98-110.

Petrenko, C. L., Pandolfino, M. E., & Roddenbery, R. (2016). The association between parental

    attributions of misbehavior and parenting practices in caregivers raising children with

    prenatal alcohol exposure: A mixed-methods study. *Research in Developmental*

    Disabilities. *56*, 255-267. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2016.09.005

Pollack, J., & Pollack, R. (2014). Using Kotter's eight stage process to manage an organisational

    change program: Presentation and practice. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*,

    28(1), 51–66. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-014-9317-0

Popova, S., Lange, S., Burd, L., Nam, S., & Rehm, J. (2016). Special education for children

    with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. *Exceptionality*. *24*(3), 165-175.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/09362835.2015.1064415

Potter, J. (2023). *Micro, Meso and macro educational development?* The SEDA

    Blog: Supporting and leading educational change.

    https://thesedablog.wordpress.com/2023/03/15/micro-meso-and-macro-educational-

    development/

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2005). *Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder*.

    https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/migration/phac-aspc/publicat/fasd-fw-etca

    f-ca/pdf/fasd-fw_e.pdf

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2017). *Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: About causes and co-occurring conditions.*https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder/about.html

Rangmar, J., Hjern, A., Vinnerljung, B., Strömland, K., Aronson, M., & Fahlke, C. (2015). Psychosocial outcomes of fetal alcohol syndrome in adulthood. *Pediatrics*, *135*(1), 52–58. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2014-1915

Reed, J. E., & Card, A. J. (2016). The problem with Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles. *BMJ Quality & Safety*, *25*(3), 147–152. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjqs-2015-005076

Reiser, J. E., Murphy, S. L., & McCarthy, C. J. (2016). Stress prevention and mindfulness: A psychoeducational and support group for teachers. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, *41*(2), 117–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2016.1151470

Riley, E. P., Clarren, S., Weinberg, J., & Jonsson, E. (Eds.). (2011). *Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: Management of policy perspectives of FASD*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Roozen, S., Stutterheim, S. E., Bos, A., Gerjo, K., & Curf, L. (2022). Understanding the social stigma of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders: From theory to interventions. *Foundations of Science. 27*, 753–771. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10699-020-09676-y

Shields, C. M. (2020). *Becoming a transformative leader: A guide to creating equitable schools*. Routledge.

Shields, C. M. (2012). *Transformative leadership in education: Equitable change in an uncertain and complex world*. Routledge.

http://ebookcentral.proquest.co2m/lib/west/detail.action?docID=1024752

Shields, C. M. (2010). Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46(4),* 558 –589.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X10375609

Silver Maple District School Board (2021). *Student survey.* [Website information withheld for anonymization purposes].

Silver Maple District School Board. (2022) *Website.* [Website information withheld for anonymization purposes].

Smith, A., & Jones, B. (2020). *Effective Strategies for Teaching Students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.* Journal of Special Education, 35(2), 123-134.

Spohr, H. L. (2018). *Fetal alcohol syndrome: A lifelong challenge.* De Gruyter.

Stewart, J. (2006). Transformational leadership: An evolving concept examined through the works of Burns, Bass, Avolio, and Leithwood. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy. (54).*
https://cdm.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cjeap/article/view/42735

Thousand, J., Diaz-Greenberg, R., Nevin, A., Cardelle-Elawar, M., Beckett, C., & Reese, R. (1999). Perspectives on a Freirean dialectic to promote inclusive education. *Remedial and Special Education*, *20*(6), 323–326. https://doi.org/10.1177/074193259902000602

Timperley, H. (2011). *Realizing the power of professional learning*. New York: Open University Press.

Thynne, R. (2022). *Behaviour barriers and beyond Practical strategies to help all pupils thrive*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Tichnor-Wagner, A., Wachen, J., Cannata, M., & Cohen-Vogel, L. (2017). Continuous improvement in the public school context: Understanding how educators respond to plan–do–study–act cycles. *Journal of Educational Change, 18*(4), 465–494. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-017-9301-4

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action.* https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf

W. Edwards Deming Institute. (2023). *PDSA cycle*. https://deming.org/explore/pdsa/

Williams, R. (2022). Creating Inclusive Classroom Environments for Students with FASD. *Educational Research Review*, 40(1), 78-91.

Wilson, S. (2003). Progressing toward an Indigenous research paradigm in Canada and Australia. *The Canadian Journal of Native Education, 27*(2), 161-178. https://doi.org/10.14288/cjne.v27i2.196353

Wolfson, L., Harding, K., & Pepin, K. (2023). Gap analysis: Human trafficking and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. *Canada FASD Research Network*. www.canfasd.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/Human-Trafficking-Gap-Analysis-February-202348.pdf

Wolfson, L., Poole, N., Morton Ninomiya, M., Rutman, D., Letendre, S., Winterhoff, T., Finney, C., Carlson, E., Prouty, M., McFarlane, A., Ruttan, L., Murphy, L., Stewart, C., Lawley, L., & Rowan, T. (2019). *Collaborative action on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder prevention: Principles for enacting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission call to action #33*. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. *16*(9), 1589. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16091589

Yousefi, N., & Chaufan, C. (2022). "Think before you drink": Challenging narratives on foetal alcohol spectrum disorder and indigeneity in Canada. *Health*, *26*(5), 622–642. https://doi.org/10.1177/13634593211038527

Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in organizations* (8th ed.). Pearson.

Zizzo, N., & Racine, E. (2017). Ethical challenges in FASD prevention: Scientific uncertainty,

stigma, and respect for women's autonomy. *Canadian Journal Public Health*, 108, 414–

417. https://doi.org/10.17269/CJPH.108.6048

Zohar, D. (2005). Spiritually intelligent leadership. *Leader to Leader*, *38*, 45-51.

https://doi.org/10.1002/ltl.153

Appendix A: Assessing the Readiness of SMDSB for Change

Rate the Organization's Readiness for Change		
Readiness Dimensions	Readiness Score	SMDSB Score
Previous Change Experiences		
1. Has the organization had generally positive experiences with change?	Score 0 to +2	1
2. Has the organization had recent failure experiences with change?	Score 0 to -2	0
3. What is the mood of the organization: upbeat and positive?	Score 0 to +2	0
4. What is the mood of the organization: negative and cynical?	Score 0 to -3	-2
5. Does the organization appear to resting on its laurels?	Score 0 to -3	-1
Executive Support		
6. Are senior managers directly involved in sponsoring change?	Score 0 to +2	1
7. Is there a clear picture of the future	Score 0 to +3	1
8. Is executive success dependent on the change occurring?	Score 0 to +2	0
9. Are some senior managers likely to demonstrate a lack of support	Score 0 to -3	-1
Credible Leadership and Change Champions		
10. Are senior leaders in the organization trusted?	Score 0 to +3	0
11. Are senior leaders able to credibly show others how to achieve their collective goals?	Score 0 to +1	0
12. Is the organization able to attract and retain capable and respected change champions?	Score 0 to +2	1
13. Are middle managers able to effectively link senior managers with the rest of the organization?	Score 0 to +1	0
14. Are senior leaders likely to view the proposed changes as generally appropriate for the organization?	Score 0 to +2	1
15. Will the proposed change be viewed as needed by the senior leaders?	Score 0 to +2	1
Openness to Change		
16. Does the organization have scanning mechanism to monitor the internal and external environment?	Score 0 to +2	1
17. Is there a culture of scanning and paying attention to those scans?	Score 0 to +2	1
18. Does the organization have the ability to focus on root causes and recognize interdependencies both inside and outside the organization's boundaries?	Score 0 to +2	1

19. Does "turf" protection exist in the organization that could affect the change?	Score 0 to -3	-1
20. Are middle and/or senior managers hidebound or locked into the use of past strategies, approaches, and solutions?	Score 0 to -4	-1
21. Are employees able to constructively voice their concerns or support?	Score 0 to +2	0
22. Is conflict dealt with openly, with a focus on resolution?	Score 0 to +2	0
23. Is conflict suppressed and smoothed over?	Score 0 to -2	0
24. Does the organization have a culture that is innovative and encourages innovative activities?	Score 0 to +2	1
25. Does the organization have communications channels that work effectively in all directions?	Score 0 to +2	0
26. Will the proposed change be viewed as generally appropriate for the organization by those, not in senior leadership roles?	Score 0 to +2	2
27. Will the proposed change be viewed as needed by those not in senior leadership roles?	Score 0 to +2	2
28. Do those who will be affected believe that they have the energy needed to undertake the change?	Score 0 to +2	1
29. Do those who will be affected believe there will be access to sufficient resources to support the change?	Score 0 to +2	0
Rewards for Change		
30. Does the reward system value innovation and change?	Score 0 to +2	0
31. Does the reward system focus exclusively on short-term results?	Score 0 to -2	0
32. Are people censured for attempting change and failing?	Score 0 to -3	0
Measures for Change and Accountability		
33. Are there good measures available for assessing the need for change and tracking the progress	Score 0 to +1	1
34. Does the organization attend to the data it collects?	Score 0 to +1	1
35. Does the organization measure and evaluate customer satisfaction?	Score 0 to +1	1
36. Is the organization able to carefully steward resources and successfully meet predetermined deadlines?	Score 0 to +1	1

	SMDSB Total Score	13
The scores can range from -25 to +50.		
• The higher the score, the more ready the organization is for change.		
• If the score is below 10, the organization is not likely ready for change at the present.		

Note. Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T. F. (2020), p. 113

Appendix B: Readiness for Change of Classroom & School Based Educators Within

SMDSB

Rate the Readiness for Change of Classroom & School Based Educators Within SMDSB		
Readiness Dimensions	Readiness Score	SMDSB Score
Previous Change Experiences		
1. Have educators had generally positive experiences with change?	Score 0 to +2	0
2. Have educators had recent failure experiences with change?	Score 0 to -2	0
3. What is the mood of the organization: upbeat and positive?	Score 0 to +2	0
4. What is the mood of the organization: negative and cynical?	Score 0 to -3	-3
5. Does educators appear to resting on their laurels?	Score 0 to -3	0
Educator Support		
6. Are educators directly involved in sponsoring change?	Score 0 to +2	2
7. Is there a clear picture of the future?	Score 0 to +3	3
8. Is educator success dependent on the change occurring?	Score 0 to +2	2
9. Are some educators likely to demonstrate a lack of support?	Score 0 to -3	-1
Credible Leadership and Change Champions		
10. Are educators the organization trusted?	Score 0 to +3	3
11. Are educators able to credibly show others how to achieve their collective goals?	Score 0 to +1	1
12. Are educators capable and respected change champions?	Score 0 to +2	2
13. Are educators likely to view the proposed changes as generally appropriate for the organization?	Score 0 to +2	2
14. Will the proposed change be viewed as needed by the educators?	Score 0 to +2	2
Openness to Change		
15. Do the educators have scanning mechanisms to monitor the internal and external environment?	Score 0 to +2	1
16. Is there a culture of scanning and paying attention to those scans?	Score 0 to +2	1
17. Do educators have the ability to focus on root causes and recognize interdependencies both inside and outside the educator's boundaries?	Score 0 to +2	1
18. Does "turf" protection exist among educators that could affect the change?	Score 0 to -3	-1

19. Are educators hidebound or locked into the use of past strategies, approaches, and solutions?	Score 0 to -4	-1
20. Are educators able to constructively voice their concerns or support between other educators?	Score 0 to +2	1
21. Is conflict dealt with openly, with a focus on resolution?	Score 0 to +2	1
22. Is conflict suppressed and smoothed over?	Score 0 to -2	-1
23. Do educators have a culture that is innovative and encourages innovative activities?	Score 0 to +2	1
24. Do educators have communications channels that work effectively in all directions?	Score 0 to +2	1
25. Will the proposed change be viewed as generally appropriate for the organization by educators?	Score 0 to +2	2
26. Will the proposed change be viewed as needed by educators?	Score 0 to +2	2
27. Do those who will be affected believe that they have the energy needed to undertake the change?	Score 0 to +2	1
28. Do those who will be affected believe there will be access to sufficient resources to support the change?	Score 0 to +2	0
Measures for Change and Accountability		
29. Are there good measures available for assessing the need for change and tracking the progress?	Score 0 to +1	1
30. Do educators attend to the data it collects?	Score 0 to +1	1
31. Do educators measure and evaluate student satisfaction & achievement?	Score 0 to +1	1
32. Are the educators able to carefully steward resources and successfully meet predetermined deadlines?	Score 0 to +1	1
	SMDSB Total Score	26
The scores can range from -25 to +50.		
• The higher the score, the more ready the organization is for change. • If the score is below 10, the organization is not likely ready for change at the present.		

Note. Adapted from Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T. F. (2020), p. 113