

Teachers' perceptions of the Kampus Mengajar program in enhancing student literacy and numeracy

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Abstract

The Kampus Mengajar Program is one of the initiatives designed by the government to address literacy and numeracy issues among students in Indonesia through collaboration between university students and elementary school teachers. This study aims to explore teachers' perceptions of the Kampus Mengajar program in improving student literacy and numeracy. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation at an elementary school in Denpasar, Bali. The results showed that, overall, teachers perceive the Kampus Mengajar program positively, as reflected in their enthusiasm and active support for its implementation. The teachers understand the program's purpose, which is to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills. However, challenges arose during implementation, such as limitations in addressing all students' needs and a reduced implementation schedule. The program is considered to have successfully met students' needs and positively impacted on their literacy and numeracy skills. The findings offer important implications for the future development and improvement of the Kampus Mengajar program.

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INTRODUCTION

Literacy and numeracy are key competencies required at the primary school level, as outlined in the Ministry of Education regulation No. 5 of 2022 on the graduate competence standard of early childhood, elementary, and secondary education, which states that these skills are essential for basic education graduates (see Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022). Mastery of literacy and numeracy from primary education has long-term benefits for academic and career success (Barham *et al.*, 2019). Literacy goes beyond reading and writing, encompassing skills to search, process, and understand information for problem-solving and goal achievement (Nizaar & Maryani, 2023). Numeracy involves understanding and applying mathematical concepts to solve everyday problems (Amir *et al.*, 2022).

The World Economic Forum (2016) emphasises the importance of literacy and numeracy as essential skills for the 21st century, categorising them into basic literacy, competence, and character quality. Basic literacy includes skills like reading, numeracy, scientific knowledge, ICT, financial literacy, and cultural understanding (World Economic Forum, 2016). Unfortunately, Indonesia struggles with low literacy and numeracy levels. A 2016 study by Central Connecticut State University ranked Indonesia 60th out of 61 countries in The World's Most Literate Nations (Febriati *et al.*, 2023). While Indonesia's PISA ranking improved slightly in 2022, moving up five positions, the scores in reading, math, and science were still lower than in 2018 (Susanto *et al.*, 2024), highlighting the ongoing challenges in improving educational outcomes.

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To address the literacy and numeracy challenges students face in Indonesia, the government has implemented several initiatives, including the School Literacy Movement, School Numeracy Movement, Kampus Mengajar program, and others. The Kampus Mengajar program is one of the government's efforts to improve literacy and numeracy at the primary school level. This program is part of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy, which allows students to study outside the classroom for one semester and contribute to education by partnering with teachers to innovate in the learning process, develop creative strategies, and implement engaging and effective learning models (Noerbella, 2022).

Several studies have shown that the Kampus Mengajar program effectively helps schools address literacy and numeracy challenges. For example, Bela *et al.* (2024) found improved literacy and numeracy skills through initiatives like reading corners and multiplication memorisation programs. Rasma *et al.* (2023) reported higher student scores at SMP 99 Malengkeri, which partnered with the Kampus Mengajar program, compared to SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Mariso, which did not. Anggraini & Rahmawati (2023) also highlighted that literacy issues were addressed through the Lakusi (Literacy Special Training) program. Research by Lisnawati *et al.* (2022) also showed that the Kampus Mengajar 2 program helped improve elementary students' literacy skills by boosting reading interest, information processing, and problem-solving abilities.

These findings suggest that the Kampus Mengajar program successfully improves students' literacy and numeracy. Bela *et al.* (2024) highlighted increased skills through targeted initiatives, while Rasma *et al.* (2023) found higher student performance in schools partnered with the program. Anggraini & Rahmawati (2023) and Lisnawati *et al.* (2022) further demonstrated that specialised programs, like Lakusi and Teaching Campus 2, effectively address literacy challenges, enhancing students' reading interest, information processing, and problem-solving skills.

Teachers' perceptions play a critical role in the success of programs like Kampus Mengajar. For example, research by Malik and Putri (2023) highlights that a lack of understanding about the program can hinder its implementation, while effective communication and coordination between schools and teachers can facilitate its success (Lasmini *et al.*, 2024). As collaborators and mentors in the program (Anggraini & Rahmawati, 2023), teachers significantly impact its effectiveness. As defined by Simbolon (2008), perception influences behaviour, making it crucial to assess how teachers perceive the Kampus Mengajar program in improving student literacy and numeracy. However, previous studies address the crucial role of teachers' perception toward the Kampus Mengajar program are limited.

In this study, we (the authors) conducted preliminary research by interviewing teachers at one elementary school in Denpasar City, Bali, to assess the progress of the Kampus Mengajar program at the school. The school selected as the site for this research has identified literacy and numeracy as areas for improvement, with the 2023 Education Report Card placing students' skills in the medium category. The school has twice hosted the Kampus Mengajar program: Batch 5 in 2023 and Batch 7 in 2024. Interviews with the principal and teachers indicated that the implementation of Batch 5 went smoothly, although there were areas requiring improvement. Interestingly, despite decreased literacy and numeracy scores in the AKM (minimum competency assessment) Pretest and Posttest for Batch 5 students, the 2024 Education Report Card shows an increase in these skills compared to the previous year. With the experience gained from Batch 5, the principal noted that implementing Batch 7 also proceeded smoothly.

Based on the previous discussion, this study aims to explore teachers' perceptions of the Kampus Mengajar program at an elementary school in Denpasar City, Bali. This topic is crucial not only because teachers' perceptions of educational policies—such as the Kampus Mengajar program—can significantly influence their support for the program, which in turn affects students' academic achievement, but also because it is important to understand the complexities of the program within the school context, with teachers being key actors in the process. This research will contribute to the ongoing discourse on the Kampus Mengajar policy. This gover-

nment initiative provides higher education (HE) students with valuable teaching and learning experiences while potentially helping schools address challenges related to teaching and learning practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Teacher's perception

Perception is organising and interpreting stimuli received through the senses, which can vary among individuals due to differences in feelings, thinking abilities, and experiences (Walgito, 2010). It involves selecting, organising, and interpreting information to create meaning (Kotler & Keller, 2016). According to Robbins and Judge (2005), individuals tend to behave based on their perception of reality, not reality itself. Internal and external factors influence perception, and while stimuli may be the same for everyone, how they are perceived differs due to individual experiences. Therefore, perception is a subjective process shaped by personal feelings, cognition, and experiences.

According to Law No. 14 of 2005, teachers are professional educators responsible for educating, guiding, training, assessing, and evaluating students from primary to secondary education (Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, 2005). Teaching requires specific preparation (Hamid, 2017), making teachers a crucial component of the learning process. Teachers' perceptions involve how they receive, organise, and interpret stimuli, in this case, the Kampus Mengajar program aimed at improving student literacy and numeracy. Teachers' perceptions of this program influence their response and actions during its implementation.

In this study, researchers used Walgito's (2010) three indicators of perception: reception, meaning or understanding, and assessment or evaluation. The first stage, reception, refers to how individuals absorb stimuli or objects from their environment through the five senses, which are then processed by the brain to create impressions. The second stage, meaning or understanding, occurs when the brain organises, classifies, and interprets the impressions or images, forming an understanding based on previous experiences. The final stage, assessment or evaluation, involves teachers comparing their understanding with existing norms or criteria, which results in their evaluation of the program.

B. Kampus Mengajar program

Kampus Mengajar is a program under the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). The program allows students to learn outside campus for one to two semesters during their four-year academic journey (Suyadi *et al.*, 2022). Students are expected to become agents of change by collaborating with teachers to enhance students' literacy and numeracy competencies, particularly in primary and secondary schools with National Assessment (AN) scores at levels 1 and 2 (Suardi & Nur, 2022). The Kampus Mengajar program has now (at the time of this research conducted) reached its 7th batch, with continuous improvements in target achievements. This progress is evident in the development of both the program participants and the assignment schools since the inception of the Pioneer Kampus Mengajar (Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Mahasiswa, 2024).

The Kampus Mengajar program generally allows students to step outside the traditional classroom for one semester, allowing them to hone essential 21st-century skills. These skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, team management, innovation and creativity, and interpersonal communication (Ode & Afrilia, 2022). By engaging in real-world educational environments, students can develop these competencies through hands-on experiences that push them to collaborate and think critically. This policy is in line with the spirit of link-and-mat-

ch that tries to close the gap between education and the industrial world by sending students to have more meaningful experiences outside their campus.

More specifically, the program is designed to address disparities in basic education quality and improve students' skills in various areas. First, it helps build leadership qualities and social empathy as students work closely with teachers and local communities. It also enhances analytical thinking as students design educational programs in collaboration with teams and schools, allowing them to effectively assess needs and tailor solutions. The program fosters problem-solving abilities by encouraging students to propose creative and innovative solutions during their assignments. Through their exposure to diverse student backgrounds and academic fields, participants develop skills in teamwork and management, learning to navigate and collaborate with others to achieve shared goals.

Furthermore, the Kampus Mengajar program promotes the development of creative and innovative teaching methods, strategies, and techniques. Students are encouraged to collaborate with teachers to design learning models that improve literacy and numeracy outcomes. Their ability to communicate effectively with teachers and relevant stakeholders plays a key role in ensuring the program's success and maximizing its impact on student learning. Finally, the program introduces a wider variety of learning methods, enriching the educational environment in primary and secondary schools. By improving literacy and numeracy, the Kampus Mengajar program contributes to the development of more dynamic and effective teaching practices in Indonesia's educational institutions (Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan, 2024).

C. Literacy dan numeracy

Literacy is a fundamental skill essential for success in both education and everyday life. It refers to a person's ability to read, write, understand, and communicate effectively (Murphy, 2023). The term literacy is frequently used in the field of education. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, literacy is defined as a person's ability to read and write, process information, and apply knowledge for life skills. In this regard, the International Literacy Association (ILA) defines literacy as the ability of students to recognize, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, auditory, and digital symbols across various disciplines and scientific topics (Direktorat Guru Pendidikan Dasar, 2022). Two key components of literacy are text and thinking skills.

Another perspective suggests that literacy involves the use of reading, writing, and spoken language to construct, integrate, and critique meaning through interaction and engagement with various forms of information within a social context (Frankel *et al.*, 2016). A person is considered to have basic literacy skills when they can recognize and use written language (Tenny *et al.*, 2021). Literacy skills can also be assessed based on a person's ability to interpret the message behind language choices, information, and ideas presented in a text (Wahid *et al.*, 2024).

On the other hand, numeracy is often associated with mathematics. However, there is a distinction between numeracy and mathematics, even though both are based on the same fundamental knowledge and skills (Ekowati & Suwandayani, 2019). Proficiency in mathematical skills does not necessarily mean that a person has strong numeracy skills. In this case, numeracy refers to the ability to use various numbers and mathematical symbols to solve practical problems in different real-life contexts. It also includes the ability to analyse information presented in various forms, such as graphs, tables, and charts, and interpret the results of such analyses to make predictions and informed decisions (Ate & Lede, 2022).

Numeracy applies numerical concepts and skills in daily life (Marcq *et al.*, 2024). It also involves confidence in engaging with quantitative information to make decisions and solve everyday problems based on available data (Ekowati & Suwandayani, 2019). Additionally, numeracy includes interpreting quantitative information, such as graphs, charts, and tables (Winarno *et al.*,

2024). Developing numeracy requires students to feel comfortable with numbers, which enhances their ability to use mathematical skills effectively and efficiently.

METHOD

This research employs qualitative research methods with a descriptive qualitative design, utilising a phenomenological approach. According to Moustakas (1994), Smith *et al.* (2009), and Creswell & Creswell (2018), the phenomenological approach is used to describe an individual's lived experience of a phenomenon as understood by the individual experiencing it. The phenomenological approach is applied to understand and describe teachers' views and perceptions of the Kampus Mengajar program in enhancing student literacy and numeracy in primary schools in Denpasar City. This study describes how teachers perceive the Kampus Mengajar program's impact on improving student literacy and numeracy. Teachers' perceptions are examined through their acceptance of the program, their understanding of it, and their assessment of its effectiveness in improving student literacy and numeracy.

In this study, the researcher selected the principal and class teachers of grades 1-6 as informants for the interviews. The principal holds a critical role in school management and decision-making, while the class teachers are directly involved in the daily learning process in the classroom, including the implementation of the Kampus Mengajar program. This research was conducted at a primary school in Denpasar City. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation. To ensure data validity, source triangulation and technique triangulation were used. Data analysis followed the four stages proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994): data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, combined with the data analysis methods from Moustakas (1994), Smith *et al.* (2009), and Creswell & Creswell (2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Kampus Mengajar program aims to improve student literacy and numeracy in Indonesia through collaboration between university students and teachers. Teachers' perceptions of a program or policy influence its implementation (Krissandi, 2018; Arrellano *et al.*, 2022). Understanding these perceptions helps identify factors that support the program's success and provides insight into its effectiveness in achieving its goals.

A. Teacher acceptance of the Kampus Mengajar program

Based on the data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation, researchers found that teachers' acceptance of the Kampus Mengajar program was generally positive. Consistent responses from various informants indicated that teachers at the elementary school in Denpasar showed high enthusiasm for the program's implementation. This enthusiasm was reflected in interviews, where several informants expressed their positive reception of the Kampus Mengajar program.

Teachers' enthusiasm for the program is primarily influenced by their prior experience with previous batches of Kampus Mengajar activities. According to Juniyanto & Nur Mahmudah (2022), teacher enthusiasm is a key factor in the program's successful implementation, as it directly impacts students' motivation and engagement. In the Kampus Mengajar program context, teachers' enthusiasm in welcoming university students plays a crucial role in fostering a positive learning environment. When teachers are actively engaged and motivated, it enhances the program's effectiveness and encourages students to participate more enthusiastically in learning activities. This aligns with Ipungkarti & Sari (2024), who state that the success of a program depends on the interest, attention, and motivation of all stakeholders involved in its implementation.

Teachers' enthusiasm is also shown in their acceptance of the Kampus Mengajar program at the elementary school in Denpasar, which is clearly stated in their words and reflected in their actions. Teachers actively socialise the program with students and parents to ensure awareness and support for its implementation. Additionally, the school provides various forms of support, such as dedicated rooms for Kampus Mengajar students, Chromebooks, and magazines, to facilitate the program's success. School support plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of educational programs. This aligns with research by Handayani *et al.* (2024), which highlights that a lack of supporting facilities and parental awareness can pose significant obstacles to the success of the Kampus Mengajar program.

The findings of this study indicate that teachers at the elementary school in Denpasar are open to the Kampus Mengajar program, driven by their expectations that it will contribute to learning innovations and facilitate knowledge-sharing between students and schools. This suggests that teachers recognise the program's role as a collaborative partner in enhancing educational practices. Furthermore, these expectations reflect the effectiveness of the communication and socialisation efforts carried out by the Kampus Mengajar team, as teachers' understanding of the program's objectives aligns with those outlined by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Based on the findings of this study, teachers' openness to the presence of the Kampus Mengajar program at SDN Kota Denpasar is based on teachers' expectations of the Kampus Mengajar program to be able to assist in creating learning innovations and sharing knowledge owned by students to schools. This explains that teachers know and realise that the Kampus Mengajar program aims to be a partner for teachers in innovating learning. The existence of these expectations shows that the communication and socialisation carried out by the Kampus Mengajar Team at the elementary school in Denpasar to schools has gone well because teachers' expectations about the purpose of the program and the role of students are in line with the objectives of the Kampus Mengajar program explained by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

B. Teachers' understanding of the Kampus Mengajar program

In the guidebook for implementing the Kampus Mengajar program Batch 7, the program is described as part of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative. It aims to provide students with off-campus learning opportunities by serving as primary and secondary education teacher partners. The program seeks to enhance student literacy and numeracy in assigned schools (Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan, 2024). These objectives align with the research findings on teachers' understanding of the Kampus Mengajar program at SDN Kota Denpasar.

Several teachers share a common understanding of the purpose and objectives of the Kampus Mengajar program at one of the elementary schools in Denpasar city. They recognize that the program's presence at the school is based on its education report card, which indicated unsatisfactory literacy and numeracy levels. As a result, the program is expected to help improve students' skills in these areas. Teachers' understanding of the Kampus Mengajar program is also shaped by the school's prior experience, having served as a placement school for two consecutive years. However, the level of understanding of the program may vary from one school to another.

Additionally, several teachers stated that they understand the Kampus Mengajar program as an initiative to introduce learning innovations and enhance the quality of education through collaboration between students, teachers, and schools. This indicates that communication and socialization between teachers and students have been effective, as teachers share a common understanding of the program's goals and objectives. Consequently, this supports the school's smooth implementation of the Kampus Mengajar program.

In line with this, Ramadansur *et al.* (2024) emphasise that a lack of communication and socialization between students and teachers can lead to confusion and misconceptions about the

Kampus Mengajar program. Furthermore, a shared understanding of the program's objectives significantly contributes to its successful implementation (Handayani *et al.*, 2024). The strong comprehension of the Kampus Mengajar program at SDN Kota Denpasar has been developed through the school's experience as a program partner for two consecutive years. This aligns with the testimony of a teacher who initially did not fully understand the program's purpose but gained clarity over time.

C. Teachers' evaluation of the Kampus Mengajar program in improving students' literacy and numeracy

Based on the findings and analysis from interviews, observations, and documentation, researchers found that the literacy and numeracy programs implemented at SDN Kota Denpasar align with students' needs. This is evident from the various initiatives designed by students, such as Manteman, Samisata, Simanis Bersila, Utama, Reading Corner, and Jelajah Sampah, all focusing on enhancing students' literacy and numeracy skills. These programs are outlined in the Collaborative Action Plan document for the Kampus Mengajar program Batch 7 at school. It includes a detailed description of each program, its objectives, and the implementation timeline. The carefully structured implementation plan, developed considering student and school needs, demonstrates that the program is effectively targeted and well-executed.

This finding is in line with this, Fidesrinur *et al.* (2022) stated that for a program to run effectively, its development must be based on observations and an analysis of student and school needs. While the programs implemented generally align with students' needs, the principals of the school noted that they have not fully addressed all student needs due to the limited scope of the initiatives. Nevertheless, teachers reported that the literacy and numeracy programs received a positive response from students, who appeared happy and enthusiastic about the presence of university students during the learning process. This suggests that the programs have successfully created an engaging and enjoyable learning environment tailored to students' needs.

In this regard, Ipungkarti & Sari (2024) said that the positive attitude given by students towards the program's implementation is the key to the success of the program implementation to achieve the expected goals. In this case, the teachers considered that the implementation of the literacy and numeracy program at school also provided new knowledge about creativity and innovation in learning. This is in accordance with the purpose of the Kampus Mengajar, which is to assist teachers in solving learning problems by providing creative and innovative solutions (Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan, 2024).

Overall, teachers assessed that implementing the Kampus Mengajar program at one of the elementary schools in Denpasar city has positively impacted students' literacy and numeracy skills. Students' literacy and numeracy activities have become more diverse, utilising creative and innovative learning approaches. Moreover, the program has significantly impacted students, including an increase in their interest and enthusiasm for learning. Additionally, the results of the minimum competency assessment (AKM) Pretest and Posttest conducted by Kampus Mengajar Batch 7 students showed a 66% improvement in literacy and numeracy skills. This demonstrates that the Kampus Mengajar program has successfully enhanced students' literacy and numeracy skills regarding academic performance and behaviour. One of our memos illustrates these positive influences as follows.

In detail, students' interest and enthusiasm for learning are demonstrated by their positive attitudes, such as their eagerness to answer questions on the mading (wall magazine) in the Manteman (Fun Math Mading) program and their active participation in public storytelling activities in the Samisata (One Week One Story) program. In this context, the teachers emphasised that the literacy and numeracy programs organised by the Kampus Mengajar team have positively impacted students' literacy skills, including increased confidence in public speaking, the ability to express opinions, and the skill to find information through reading. The positive effects on numeracy skills are evident in

the students' changed perceptions of numeracy learning, which was previously viewed as daunting. These programs have helped make learning more enjoyable, boosting students' enthusiasm and motivation. Additionally, students' reasoning skills have improved, enabling them to solve problems using mathematical concepts and symbols.

In line with this, Lisnawati *et al.* (2022) revealed that the Kampus Mengajar program has been proven to positively impact students' literacy and numeracy skills, including fostering students.

Several factors certainly influence the successful implementation of a program. In this case, the teachers believe that key factors contributing to the program's success include collaboration, support, commitment, socialisation, and consistency in program implementation. Strong support and collaboration between all parties ensure the program is implemented effectively, providing significant benefits for students and schools. In this context, the school's collaboration between students and teachers was very successful. It is known that, in designing work programs, students engage in discussions with teachers to ensure that the programs align with the needs of both students and the school. Through these discussions, a collaborative program was created between teachers and students: Manteman and Samisata, which were initiated by the principal, also a member of the Teacher Mover. This demonstrates that the school fully supports implementing the Kampus Mengajar program.

The long-term impact can be obtained if the literacy and numeracy programs implemented during the Kampus Mengajar assignment period are still implemented even though the students are no longer in charge of the school. Regarding the potential sustainability of the program, the teachers argued that they have the desire to be able to continue the program that has been implemented by the Kampus Mengajar team at SDN Kota Denpasar, even though they cannot implement it in its entirety as before due to limited human resources and time. This shows that the teachers consider the Kampus Mengajar program to have positively contributed to students' literacy and numeracy skills. Ipungkarti and Sari (2024) revealed that an evaluation is needed to ensure the program's improvement and sustainability. Regarding programs that want to continue to be implemented, the school will evaluate the program to see which programs have significantly impacted students. Then, programs that are deemed effective will be integrated into the school culture to become a routine at school.

Although the Kampus Mengajar program is generally viewed as having a positive impact, there is consensus on the need for changes to enhance its sustainability and effectiveness. These include extending the program duration, increasing activity variety, and improving program quality. Teachers argue that the current 4-month period is insufficient for embedding literacy and numeracy as a school culture, especially with interruptions from national and Hindu holidays in Bali. However, this challenge can be addressed with more careful planning, factoring in holidays to optimise implementation time. Ramadansur *et al.* (2024) also highlights that inadequate scheduling can hinder the program's success. Regarding program variety, although the Collaboration Action Plan offers diverse activities, most are targeted at fifth-grade students, suggesting the need for similar programs for younger grades. Teachers also emphasise the importance of evaluating the programs to ensure ongoing improvement, aligning with Handayani *et al.* (2024), who stress the necessity of program evaluation to assess long-term impacts and refine future initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Based on research on teachers' perceptions of the Kampus Mengajar program in enhancing student literacy and numeracy, several conclusions can be drawn. First, teachers at SDN Kota Denpasar have a positive perception of the Kampus Mengajar program, as demonstrated by their strong enthusiasm and active contributions to its success. Their support extends beyond words to concrete actions, such as socializing the program to students and parents and providing neces-

sary facilities. Second, teachers' understanding of the program aligns with its objectives outlined in the guidebook. They recognize its role in improving literacy and numeracy, particularly in response to the school's unsatisfactory education report card. Additionally, they acknowledge the program's emphasis on learning innovation through collaboration among students, teachers, and schools. Third, the Kampus Mengajar program has effectively addressed students' needs in literacy and numeracy development. Initiatives such as Manteman and Samisata have been designed to align with the school's and students' requirements.

While the program has been well received and successfully implemented, some challenges remain. Improvements are needed, including better scheduling that accounts for holidays to optimize program execution, expanding literacy and numeracy initiatives beyond fifth grade, and conducting regular evaluations to ensure program effectiveness. Furthermore, post-implementation assessments are necessary to measure the program's long-term impact and sustainability in the school.

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