

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES

A Dissertation By

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Abstract:

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the perspectives of teachers' social-emotional competencies, the development of social-emotional competencies, and the practice and implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL). Structured interviews were conducted with ten teachers and four administrators at four different schools (public, private and charter). The teacher participants completed a social-emotional self-reflection tool in order to triangulate the data. The study findings suggested that teachers received insufficient SEL training and limited SEL modeling in their preservice program. Recommendations were made to enable teachers at various stages throughout their career to build social emotional competencies, such as self-regulation and modeling of SEL skills, so that they may teach them to their students.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teachers can profoundly affect a child's moral, character, and personal development (Darling-Hammond, 2009, A. Jones et al., 2013). While factors such as social media, peers, and parenting styles can play an essential role in a child's mental, behavioral, and emotional development (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006; Shaw & Starr, 2019), teachers have proven to have a transformative influence that impacts students in significant ways (Brackett et al., 2011; Hargreaves, 1998). Researchers have noted that educational practices have focused on developing a teacher's instructional strategies and academic teaching competencies and have therefore not prioritized developing teachers' social-emotional and cultural competencies (Allen et al., 2017; Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Dufour & Marzano, 2012; Durlak, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2014). This disproportionate emphasis is in contrast with emerging bodies of research that have shown that placing an equal priority on teachers' academic skills and the development of teachers' social, emotional, and cultural competencies is linked to students' greater academic, social, and emotional success (Cantor et al., 2019; Domitrovich et al., 2017; Durlak et al., 2011; Elias, 2009; Garner et al., 2018; Grant 2017; S. Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Zins et al., 2007).

Policy reform has advocated for explicitly teaching social-emotional skills and developing cultural proficiency in teachers in response to the educational pivot towards supporting children's social and emotional needs (Allbright & Marsh, 2020; Aspen Institute, 2018). Social-emotional learning (SEL) is the process of developing social-emotional competencies and teaching skills, attitudes, and knowledge that help people identify and regulate emotions to develop positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and build the foundation for teaching and learning at schools (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2012). CASEL has identified five core social-emotional competencies that can be explicitly taught and developed throughout one's life (CASEL, 2016): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. These competencies are necessary to support

one's well-being and promote greater success in personal, academic, and professional life (Domitrovich et al., 2017). Teachers who choose to develop social-emotional competencies have been shown to be beneficial to students (Durlak, 2015; Durlak et al., 2011). Ultimately, teachers are the key to effectively implementing social-emotional approaches and curricula (Elias, 2009; Zins et al., 2007).

Research on SEL has studied the relationship between a teacher's social-emotional competencies and the SEL implementation process. The bulk of the research to date has emphasized SEL curriculum and instructional practices for students and less so on teachers' development of their own adult social-emotional skills and competencies (Brownell et al., 2019; Corcoran & Tormey, 2012a; Elias, 2009; Murano et al., 2019; Yoder, 2014). Understanding teachers' social and emotional competencies and how those competencies affect teaching practice is critical to addressing the challenges in today's classrooms (Buettner, 2016; Herrenkohl et al., 2019).

Well-developed social and emotional skills, also known as emotional intelligence, are required to navigate many aspects of our daily lives: experiencing positive interpersonal relationships, coping well with stress, persevering when faced with challenges, and self-regulating when becoming upset (Goleman, 1995). During a single day, teachers and students engage in many social interactions and emotional moments, ranging from something as mundane as walking to class to more complex interactions that require more cognitive demand and complex mental astuteness, such as collaborating on a project. The ability to engage in daily prosocial interactions allows us to either come closer towards psychological and personal well-being or move further away from our goals of fulfilling relationship connections (Goleman, 1995).

Several major world and national events in 2020 revealed how vital social-emotional competencies are for adults and children. With the emergence of COVID-19 in 2020, educators experienced a real-life assessment of their core social-emotional competencies and, in turn, have had the opportunity to reflect on their social-emotional competencies and those of their students. The social and physical distancing, job loss, and remote learning because of COVID-19 restrictions

impacted numerous communities in ways that some continued to deal with well into 2021. Teachers experienced challenges related to how they respond to stress and uncertainty during challenging times. In response to the challenges teachers face as a result of COVID-19, CASEL put forth a resource for educators to address students' social-emotional needs in order to support their transition back to school (CASEL, 2020). Social-emotional competencies such as self-awareness, resilience, compassion, empathy, and effective communication skills allow people to function more productively in the face of adversity (Kaufman, 2020).

The purpose of SEL development in students is clear, yet the function of social-emotional development in teachers is an area of focus that has seen far less research (Murano et al., 2019). The research shows that developing teachers' social-emotional competencies allows them to be more fully equipped to teach their students social-emotional learning (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Osher et al., 2016). In a report on the long-term impact of SEL, Shwartz et al. (2020) found that in order for adults to effectively teach students how to manage their emotions and develop healthy relationships, they need to first learn how to do the same. Thus, the development of teachers' social-emotional competencies, not just academic teaching competencies, is of great importance as we address students' overall needs and aim to support our educators as they face some of the most challenging times in their profession. Teachers' perceptions of their social-emotional competencies in their daily teaching experience and how SEL inform their teaching practices in the classroom provided this study's focus.

Background of the Problem

Until the 1990's, SEL was not a well-known term used in education. Rather, educators would commonly use terms such as character development or the whole-child method to describe an approach to meeting the social, emotional, cognitive, and academic needs of children (Morse & Allensworth, 2015). The *whole-child method* refers to a general practice where teachers ensure that they create a learning environment where students are the recipients of healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged experiences. Like SEL, the whole-child approach places a high value on

teacher and student relationships. However, there is a notable departure between whole child learning and social-emotional learning. SEL is a research-based, educational approach that informs instructional practices, curriculum programs, explicit lessons, and practical applications (CASEL, 2012). A large body of research has shown that SEL promotes greater academic achievement, increases student well-being, and has protective factors against anxiety, depression, and other mental health-related conditions (Durlak, 2015; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Wentzel, 1993).

Teachers are encountering a wide range of nonacademic challenges that students are bringing to the classroom that falls under the scope of SEL. SEL has emerged as an umbrella term for many concepts in recent decades, including noncognitive development, character education, 21st-century skills, and trauma-informed learning. There are alarming rates of mental health problems in children and adults, which now accounts for 13%-20% of children between 12 and 17 years old and 20%-25% in adults (CDC.gov, 2020; National Alliance of Mental Illness, 2019). Of those children, data shows that about half of them require treatment and outside support for mental health related issues. Student mental health affects their ability to learn and thrive in school, and many of these disorders are now on the rise. The most prevalent mental health behaviors students are exhibiting come in the form of internalizing behaviors that are not often visible to teachers, such as suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety. The more visible or externalizing behaviors, such as ADHD, physical aggression, and substance abuse, are also problematic (Ghandour et al., 2019).

The challenges with student mental health problems are compounded by the growing disparity in student achievement gaps, which has rapidly escalated in minority populations of non-English speakers and students in special education programs (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2019). The highest reported mental health issues come from LGBTQ+ and historically marginalized students, but without increasing school counselors' staff ratios, the responsibility often falls on the teachers' shoulders to intervene and support those students with mental health concerns (Oberle et al., 2016). Despite the challenges teachers face, current research proposes that there are explicit SEL strategies to teach students how to cope with obstacles (CASEL, 2016).

As a result of the growing rates of mental health concerns and widening achievement gaps in students in Grades K-12, federal policy initiatives have incorporated social, emotional, and behavioral factors into education accountability metrics (e.g., ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act). School climate and antibullying initiatives, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and discipline reform are increasingly influencing the day-to-day practice of schools and communities as a response to the aforementioned problems (Apple, 2007). In addition to these in-school initiatives, a growing field of research has explored how teacher training preparation programs are embedding SEL in training new teachers (Murano et al., 2019; Stites et al., 2018). The research shows that generally teachers across the United States have received little training in how to promote social-emotional skills or to develop the skills to effectively address SEL related issues in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Lopes et al., 2012). As the field of SEL has rapidly expanded, teachers are becoming aware of how their social-emotional competencies impact their SEL classroom implementation, and are expressing the desire to address their skills to better support their students' academic and social-emotional development (Dweck, 2014; Poulou, 2018, Yoder, 2014).

Problem Statement

The problem this study addressed was the lack of teachers' social-emotional competencies and the negative impact it has on teacher well-being and their student's academic, social, and emotional development. Although research has shown that explicitly teaching SEL skills helps children become more successful academically, socially, and emotionally at school and later in life (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Jazaieri, 2018), practical applications of those theories have been more problematic for teachers (Durlak, 2016; Yeung et al., 2016). If teachers do not develop adequate social-emotional competencies themselves, then the implementation of SEL may be fraught with challenges and pitfalls despite the teacher's efforts. Additionally, the stress placed on teachers to address the vast array of academic, social and emotional needs of students in their classrooms has led to high teacher burnout (Oberle et al., 2016). The relationship between teachers' social-emotional competencies and how they are developed and implemented in the classroom is a problem that

effects both students and teachers. For this study, exploring teachers' perceptions of their social-emotional competencies, how those competencies are developed, and the ways social-emotional learning is implemented in the classroom help provide insight into the relationship between SEL and teacher preservice training, professional development, and teacher well-being.

SEL is a pedagogical approach and curricular practice that addresses the continual rise of academic and social-emotional educational issues that impact equity and social justice. Despite teachers' efforts to support their students, there has been a continual widening of the academic achievement gap between Black and Hispanic, and White students in the United States (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). These achievement gaps seem to widen as marginalized students move through their elementary and secondary education (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). Historically marginalized students have greater high school drop-out and suspension rates, and studies show that these students struggle more significantly with mental health issues than White students (Aspen Institute, 2018; Gregory & Fergus, 2017). Furthermore, childhood depression, anxiety, teacher burnout, teacher stress, and a widening gap in academic achievement between minority and White students (NIMH, 2019; Oberle et al., 2016) has also persisted.

Studies into the degree of teacher SEL adoption and the mechanisms in place to support SEL implementation are lacking in published research. Because of the wide-reaching, potential impact SEL practices have on students and teachers, educational scholars have explored the benefits SEL may have on teachers and students. Research has suggested that the development of social-emotional competencies is a panacea for what ails our schools and our society (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017; Seligman, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand teachers' perceptions regarding their social-emotional competencies, how they perceived the development of those social-emotional competencies, and how teachers' competencies affect their SEL teaching practice. The research questions aimed to understand how teachers can best support their students' academic, social, and

emotional needs while simultaneously ensuring their own personal well-being is supported and professional goals are reached. The study investigated what social-emotional competencies teachers embody, what professional learning takes place to help nurture SEL competencies, and how the social-emotional competencies of teachers are put into practice.

Research Questions

To explore the relationship of teachers' social-emotional competencies and how they affect students and teachers, I identified the following three research questions to guide this qualitative research study:

1. What social-emotional skills, dispositions, and competencies do teachers and school administrators identify as important to teaching?
2. How, if at all, do teachers incorporate social and emotional learning into instruction and curricula?
3. What forms of teachers' social and emotional learning training, development, and supports are perceived as being most helpful to teachers working in K-12 schools?

Significance of the Study

Teachers play a critical role in students' academic, social, and emotional development (Durlak, 2015; Durlak et al., 2011). Teachers are responsible for creating and maintaining the culture and climate of their classroom, embedding expectations, and modeling, nurturing, and supporting their students' skills (Elias, 2009; Zins et al., 2007). If teachers are to succeed at meeting the academic, social and emotional needs of their students, then teachers may also need to better develop their social-emotional competencies and SEL training (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Osher et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2020). This research study is significant for making a contribution to understanding the ways in which teachers' social-emotional competencies affect students social-emotional learning. Additionally, school administrators can address areas of professional development that will allow teachers to be more successful as they implement social-emotional learning. Teachers reflections on the areas of social-emotional competencies that contribute to their success to support students academically, socially, and emotionally also promote teacher well-being for themselves. The process

of reflection, identifying areas of social-emotional learning focus has value in teacher and student well-being.

The implications for this study could be a pathway to increasing teacher retention and more successful implementation of SEL, leading to greater student academic achievement and social-emotional well-being. Finite fiscal resources require educational dollars to be thoughtfully allocated towards the training and development of teachers that may lead to the greater outcomes for students. This research on teacher social-emotional competencies can impact teachers' growth as educators, which will, in turn, affect student learning and achievement.

Scope of the Study

This study considered the perceptions, development, and teaching implementation of an educators' social-emotional competencies. The core social-emotional competencies include five areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2012; Domitrovich et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Elias, 1997; Zins, 2004). This study did not examine the difference between new teachers' and veteran teachers' social-emotional competencies and their implementation of SEL. However, it would be worthwhile for future studies to compare whether the length of teacher years in service makes a difference in developing social-emotional competencies.

Assumptions of the Study

There are several core assumptions in this study. The study assumes that teachers who participated in this study have completed a teacher education program; understood the questions that I was asking and were able to answer honestly; and that participants in the study had been introduced or exposed to some SEL concepts. Furthermore, the participants in this study were considered to be able to explain their thoughts, intentions, and actions.

The literature review revealed three essential claims:

- Educators may not be fully equipped with well-developed social-emotional competencies (Brackett, & Katulak, 2007; Domitrovich et al., 2017).

- Teacher preparation programs do not embed SEL theory and practice sufficiently into their preservice programs (Donahue et al., 2019; Stites et al., 2018).
- The educational environments, school culture, and in-service professional development at the school site, either support or constrict teachers' ability to develop their social-emotional competencies and implement SEL (Collie et al., 2011; Collie et al., 2015).

Study Delimitations

There are several aspects of my study that I deliberately chose not to consider. Because the study's scope was to understand better the perspectives of teachers' social and emotional competencies and how those competencies developed, I did not address the SEL programs or curricula selected by teachers to implement in the classroom; SEL programs are well outlined in the CASEL handbook (CASEL, 2012). Instead, this study focused on teachers' perceptions of their social-emotional competencies and how they are put into practice personally and professionally. Also, CASEL expands on the implementation of SEL and provides examples of assessment tools used to determine students' development of SEL skills based on discipline practices. Additionally, although SEL matters significantly to students in primary and secondary year, teachers' observable social competencies are more evident in early childhood education (Conners-Burrow et al., 2017; Hemmeter et al., 2008). Understanding the differences in social-emotional competencies between early childhood, primary, and secondary was not within the scope of this study.

Study Limitations

There are several limitations to the study that were beyond my control as a researcher. The COVID-19 health crisis forced schools and districts to modify their classroom learning models to employ such models as hybrid learning, online learning, and onsite learning with reduced class sizes. COVID-19 health guidelines limited class sizes to lower student-to-teacher ratios, with an average of about 12-14 students per class, and students and teachers were required to wear masks throughout the day to prevent transmission of the virus. Learning platforms such as Zoom and Google Classroom were used for remote learning classrooms. Due to these circumstances, curriculum expectations and instructional implementation were modified to meet typical instructional practices.

The study was not meant to address teachers' social-emotional competencies during COVID-19. However, the teaching climate of COVID-19 may have influenced the participants' interview responses. Teachers reflected on their current feelings and experiences in relation to responses during a typical teaching year scenario. In order to maintain physical distance requirements observing teachers in the classroom was not an option for this study, and the study did not include any in-person interviews or teacher observations.

Definitions of Key Terms

The Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). CASEL is a trusted source for knowledge about high-quality, evidence-based SEL curriculum and programs. CASEL supports educators and policy leaders and enhances the experiences and outcomes for all PreK-12 students (CASEL, 2016).

Cultural competency. The ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures; being aware of one's world view; developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences and celebrating differences; and developing knowledge of different cultural practices and world views (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Emotional intelligence (EI). Salovey and Mayer (1990) originated the theory of EI and Goleman (1995) popularized the concept, describing emotional intelligence as the ability to monitor one's own and other feelings and emotions, discriminate among them, and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.

Growth mindset. A belief that intelligence can grow over time. Students with a growth mindset understand they can get smarter through hard work, practical strategies, and help from others when needed (Dweck, 2014).

Positive discipline. Based on the psychological theory of Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs, Jane Nelsen (Nelsen, 2006) designed an approach to teach parents and teachers to become responsible, respectful, and resourceful members of their communities. The belief is that people can

learn essential social and life skills that are a respectful and encouraging manner for both children and adults.

Positive psychology. The scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive and the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, cultivate what is best within themselves, and enhance their experiences of love, work, and play (Seligman, 2011).

Self-efficacy. One's belief in one's ability to succeed and develop one's internal locus of control (intrinsic motivation mechanism) and develop one's competence (Bandura, 1977).

Social-emotional learning (SEL). SEL is the process of developing and using the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that help youth and adults identify and regulate emotions to develop positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and build the foundation for teaching and learning at schools. (CASEL, 2012).

Social-emotional competencies. CASEL has identified five core social-emotional competencies that can be explicitly taught and developed throughout one's life (CASEL, 2016). The five core competencies identified are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills.

Social skills. Research has identified five broad dimensions of social skills that teachers foster in students: peer relations (e.g., collaborating), self-management (e.g., controlling aggression), academic skills (e.g., working independently), compliance skills (e.g., following rules) and assertion skills (asking clarifying questions; Durlak et al., 2011).

Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter 1, I provided a context regarding the benefits of developing teachers' social-emotional competencies and then defined the problem and purpose of this study. I further discussed the significance and scope of the study and provided definitions for key terms. Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the literature about the research question and frames the research with a historical and theoretical framework, concluding with the conceptual framework. Chapter 3 contains the

research design, including data collection and analysis methods. Chapter 4 presents the study's findings, and in Chapter 5, I discuss conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations for policy and practice.

CHAPTER 2

EXISTING RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In Chapter 2, the literature review provides a background summary of the historical and theoretical foundations of social-emotional competencies related to SEL. This chapter includes focused sections from the literature that are most relevant to this study: the prevalence of teacher SEL and cultural competencies, teacher SEL preparation, training and support, the requirement of effective SEL implementation, and the need to promote teacher well-being to build teacher emotional capacity and prevent the high level of teacher burnout. There is also a section on SEL outcomes related to teacher and student mental health and well-being. Finally, the study's conceptual framework presents the relationship between teachers' social, emotional, and cultural competencies' impact on teaching and learning, teacher retention, and overall influence on student academic, social and emotional growth.

Epistemological, Historical, and Theoretical Foundations

Epistemological Foundations

SEL is an approach to teaching and learning that instills essential life skills, such as self-regulation, coping strategies, empathy, personal well-being, and compassion (CASEL, 2016). The development of social and emotional competencies are critical mechanisms required to build socially responsible citizens, address systemic racism, and nurture empowering and equitable communities of practice that lead to individual and communal emotional wellness (Aspen Institute, 2018; Domitrovich et al., 2015; Paradies et al., 2015). The research considers SEL to be an integral part of teaching and learning, rather than a separate curriculum or academic discipline. SEL is the process through which we learn to develop core competencies in five areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2012). Research has identified five broad dimensions of social skills teachers foster in students: peer relations (e.g., collaborating), self-management (e.g., controlling aggression), academic skills (e.g., working

independently), compliance skills (e.g., following rules), and assertion skills (asking clarifying questions; Domitrovich et al., 2015; Durlak, 2011; Elias, 1997; Zins, 2004).

The premise of SEL is that it offers a new approach to education, one that elevates prior reform efforts of teaching and learning that have failed to address prevailing issues around equity, the achievement gap, rising mental health concerns, and marginalized students (Aspen Institute, 2018). SEL competencies (See Figure 1) have been specifically developed by the CASEL to empower educators to implement explicit and systematic, comprehensive SEL educational programs such as Second Step (Moy & Hazen, 2018), the RULER program (Rivers et. al., 2013) and Responsive Classroom (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014). Programs such as these are having a significant impact on students' academic, social, and emotional growth. Other SEL approaches, such as Positive Discipline (Nelsen, 2006) is based on building a community of belonging and connection by promoting prosocial behavior via the development of adult social and emotional competencies.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) COMPETENCIES

SELF-AWARENESS

The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset."

- IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS
- ACCURATE SELF-PERCEPTION
- RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS
- SELF-CONFIDENCE
- SELF-EFFICACY

SOCIAL AWARENESS

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- PERSPECTIVE-TAKING
- EMPATHY
- APPRECIATING DIVERSITY
- RESPECT FOR OTHERS

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

- IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS
- ANALYZING SITUATIONS
- SOLVING PROBLEMS
- EVALUATING
- REFLECTING
- ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

SELF-MANAGEMENT

The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

- IMPULSE CONTROL
- STRESS MANAGEMENT
- SELF-DISCIPLINE
- SELF-MOTIVATION
- GOAL SETTING
- ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

- COMMUNICATION
- SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
- RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
- TEAMWORK

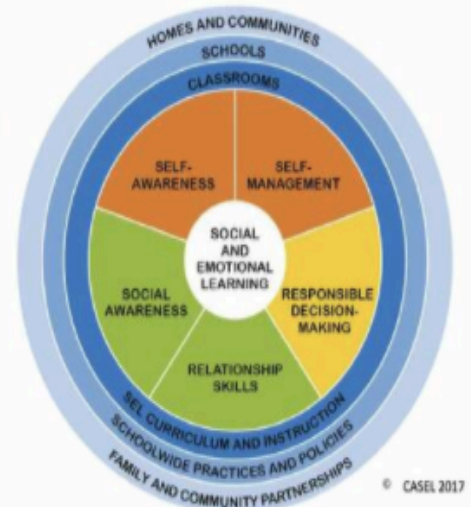


Figure 1. Social and emotional learning competencies. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2017). Core SEL competencies. Adapted from <http://www.casel.org/core-competencies/>

The foundation of SEL is to create concrete processes through which educators can build social and emotional competencies in students, leading to prosocial skills, academic development, and well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Although there is a plethora of research supporting the value of students' social and emotional competencies, limited research addresses how teachers

develop these same skills (Elias, 1997; Hen & Goroshit, 2016; Sklad et al., 2012). The degree to which teacher preparation programs equip teacher candidates with social and emotional competencies and SEL practices and skills to promote SEL in classrooms has not been studied (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). For this reason, this study focused on understanding the process and methods teachers believe they undergo to develop social-emotional competencies and how those skills are put into practice once they reach the classroom. Deepening our understanding of these teachers' processes may allow school leaders to attend to fiscal resources, training resources, and professional development more strategically.

Historical Foundations

Efforts to bring SEL to the forefront of K-12 education have been a slow movement for since 1990. Until the past few decades, the term *SEL* was not a well-known term used in education. The failure of prior policy initiatives, such as No Child Left Behind (Apple, 2007), and the lack of transformational change required on an institutional level (Kohn, 2006) have been factors in the SEL movement's lag. However, a greater emphasis in the early 21st century has shifted towards SEL to support students' academic development, mental health, and emotional well-being (Allbright & Marsh, 2020). This section outlines the historical foundation of SEL, its origins, and prevalence. The development of the social-emotional learning landscape is discussed, concluding with the present trend in education to adopt SEL as a best practice.

A movement towards implementing SEL into K-12 education has indicated a greater need to instill social and emotional skills beyond the early childhood years. SEL emerged from a culmination of research and policy development. Historically, there is confusion about the meaning of the term *SEL*. The misunderstanding of SEL's definition may arise because various initiatives, frameworks, and policies have been used interchangeably with the term. For example, PBIS (Ross et al., 2012, Sugai & Horner, 2020), Response to Intervention (RTI) (Hurlbut & Tunks, 2016; Patrikakou et al., 2016), and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) (Sobel & Gutierrez, 2009) have been used interchangeably despite their unique differences. There may be overlap in their approach's

philosophy, but these programs and terms are distinct in their theory and practice. The lack of clarity of the nuanced practices has been a factor in causing misunderstanding for educators when it comes to comprehending the complexity of process and approach to teaching and learning SEL relative to other frameworks (Patrikakou et al., 2016; Payton et al., 2000).

This section identifies the early development of SEL via policy initiatives to improve student academic achievement and student well-being. The timeline presents a brief overview of how the formation of SEL has broadened the scope of education to include a greater focus on soft skills or skills that are nonacademic, such as self-regulation, collaboration, and interpersonal skills. The subtle distinctions and historical differences among various educational initiatives used to describe SEL provide insight into the development of equally prioritizing academic, cognitive, and social-emotional learning. The section ends with the notion that SEL stands out alone as an approach and curriculum method, and it should be perceived differently among the other concepts and frameworks that have historically been used interchangeably in education.

1980s-1990s

During the 1980s, a movement led to the improved selection, implementation, and documentation of effective behavioral interventions for students with behavior challenges (George et al., 2003; Horner & Sugai, 2000). However, these efforts to respond to challenging behaviors indicated greater attention needed toward prevention, research-based practices, data-based decision-making, school-wide systems, explicit social skills instruction, team-based implementation, and professional development (Horner & Sugai, 2000). In the late 20th century, the idea of developing an individual's social capital, or leveraging one's social skills to advance oneself professionally, stemmed from research at Yale University that developed a measure of emotional intelligence (Solovey & Mayer, 1990). Striving to address equity issues, research has indicated that historically marginalized students who developed relationship-based social skills were able to overcome obstacles that paved the way to more educational and occupational opportunities (Comer, 2015). Despite the research emerging in the field of SEL, the scope of research focus during this time period

in education was geared more towards interventions for students with learning disabilities or significant behavioral challenges (Stage & Quiroz, 1997). The 1990s marked a shift from focusing on the needs of students with cognitive deficits, learning disabilities, or significant emotional challenges to include students in general education also needing support to develop their social and emotional skills.

In the 1990s, some of the more well-known SEL concepts were introduced to mainstream culture. Researchers at Yale University (Solovey & Mayer, 1990) discovered that “soft skills,” such as problem-solving, communication, and teamwork, are critical skills that could make a significant difference in the academic, social, and emotional growth of marginalized students and students with significant behavioral problems, considered “at-risk” youth (Elias et al., 1997). Shortly after that, the term *SEL* was established by CASEL (Elias, 1997). The CASEL guide became a reference tool to gain insight into the process of acquiring and mastering these skills (CASEL, 2012). Through the research at Yale (Solovey & Mayer, 1990) and then later at the University of Illinois at Chicago (Elias et al., 1997), CASEL propelled forward with SEL a comprehensive resource guide, merging the research from the fields of education, psychology, child advocacy, and neuroscience.

To partly address the need to understand SEL better and provide additional resources to support educators, in 1994, CASEL, a national organization and think tank, was officially formed. In the ensuing decades, CASEL has done extensive research surveying the benefits of teaching skills to develop emotional insight and manage emotions, how to care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and navigate negative behaviors (CASEL, 2012; Bridgeland et al., 2013; Hernández-Amorós & Urrea-Solano, 2017).

The broader culture has also seen the development of social-emotional learning over the past 30 years. The ideas relating to emotional well-being, emotional growth, and emotional competence captured the imagination of the general public in several best-selling books, including *Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, 1995), *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (Gardener, 1999), and *Learned Optimism* (Seligman, 1991). Goleman (1995) later cofounded CASEL

(CASEL, 2012). The need to reassess how academic rigor and instructional practices support children's needs in school created a national dialogue around "soft skills" and the benefits of balancing academics with SEL. These best-sellers not only propelled more research and national interest in SEL into the forefront of education, but there began increased visibility around the adoption of district-wide frameworks such as PBIS.

In the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997 (The Individuals with Disabilities, Education Act. 20USC x1400, 2004), a grant established a national Center on PBIS. PBIS legislation was geared towards providing financial assistance and educational resources to schools on evidence-based practices to improve support for students with disabilities (Sugai & Horner, 2020). This funding provided schools with the ability to offer students more social-emotional education, which indicated a shift from prioritizing academic skills to also valuing a students' social-emotional development. Consequently, this funding allowed for greater professional development, broadened the scope of interventions, and allowed for more staffing support, primarily for special education students. The funding also allowed for the development of a broader range of accommodation options for students in special education, including students with learning disabilities, gifted students, and students with other health impairments. However, the shift in providing SEL to general education students had not yet been realized as a universal intervention for the general education population.

2000s-2010s

RTI emerged from the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, but the roots of RTI are embedded within the history of the field of learning disabilities (Hurlbut & Tunks, 2016; Patrikakou et al., 2016). The idea of RTI is not a method, but an approach a teacher can employ so they can use interventions with all students to help them succeed in the classroom. One recent research study found that preservice teachers trained in RTI prevention practices had better outcomes with student learning (Hurlbut & Tunks, 2016). The training included information on how to use assessment and progress monitoring data to make decisions, participate in team problem

solving, and select effective research-based interventions appropriate for specific student needs. This research is valuable because it shows that the collective efforts to train teachers to develop their skills to implement RTI properly are critical to teaching them. The shift from students' receiving social skills training in general education rather than delivering them solely as a special education service to students with learning disabilities who have received an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 designation created a new challenge for teachers who had not received that training. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom.

2010s to Present

As we moved into the 2010s, we began to see that there was an evolution in the systematic support and approach to teaching all students critical academic and SEL skills, including students who are receiving special education services, as well as students placed in general education classrooms (Brantlinger et al., 2005, Brownell et al., 2019). In 2011, with the help of CASEL advocating for more SEL in teaching training programs, congress pushed forward the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2011. To promote the development of SEL programs and curricula that showed significant applications to general educational settings, districts began to adopt SEL programs from the CASEL Guide (CASEL, 2012). By 2015, many districts had already included behavior data in their RTI processes, making MTSS only an updated term for some.

Many states and districts developed their definitions related to the integration of SEL as they worked to comply with ESSA, 2014. Atlanta Public Schools became the first large school district to partner with CASEL and implement systemic SEL. In 2015, CASEL published its second primary guide to evidence-based SEL programs, the 2015 *CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Middle and High School Edition*. In partnership with California's CORE districts, Transforming Education, RAND Corporation, and Harvard University, CASEL launched its Work Group to Establish Practical Social-Emotional Competence Assessments.

A Paradigm Shift in SEL Education

Historically, SEL has often been used synonymously with character education, bullying prevention education, PBIS, and MTSS. However, SEL has become a separate and distinct trend in education that has impacted our understanding of SEL teaching (Domitrovich et al., 2017). More significant research efforts and increased support for SEL policy and practices in primary and secondary education have shown to provide significant benefits to students in various demographics of education, including general education, special education, minority students, English learners, and students at risk for mental health challenges (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Stephens & Vantassel-Baska, 2019).

Although there has been general agreement among educators in support of SEL theory and practices, a foundational challenge continues to be found in the adoption of SEL practices, the development of SEL skills, and the implementation of an SEL approach. The gap in SEL research and practice is shown in “The Missing Piece: A National Teacher Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools” (Bridgeland et al., 2013). This extensive study revealed that teachers in the United States understand that SEL is critical to education and want quality SEL for their students. However, efforts to promote SEL within models such as MTSS may have fallen short in developing teachers’ capacity to implement SEL (Sobel & Gutierrez, 2009). Despite the lag in SEL, a recent meta-analysis showed that SEL’s impact is long term and global when implemented with fidelity (Taylor et al., 2017). The study validated that popular SEL programs, such as Second Step (Moy & Hazen, 2018) and Responsive Classroom (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014), continue to benefit students for months and even years after implementation occurred (Taylor et al., 2017).

Research findings about SEL have led to greater attention to SEL programs and education (CASEL, 2016). Efforts on the national, state, and local levels to implement SEL within schools highlight the interest in bringing SEL to the forefront of institutional practices.

Theoretical Foundations

In this section of the chapter, I discuss the theoretical foundation of this study, which includes three core guiding theories presented by Maslow (1943), Bandura (1977), and Seligman (1991). Maslow's humanistic and motivational learning theory, Bandura's social cognitive theory, and Seligman's positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA) theory, have a unifying idea: Human's driving force is to strive towards belonging, significance, and personal fulfillment. These theories collectively imply that the environments that we create in our schools, home, and communities can either assist or hinder children in achieving those very goals. Furthermore, through the development of prosocial skills and management of feelings and behavior, individuals become positive contributing members of society, fulfilled personally and professionally.

Maslow's humanistic theory of human motivation and his development of the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) explored this desire for individuals to work towards personal fulfillment. Bandura's social learning theory, also referred to as the social cognitive theory, is more geared towards developing an internal locus of control and self-efficacy within a social context, infusing practices that lead to intrinsic motivation (Bandura, 1977). *Self-efficacy* refers to individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to carry out a particular course of action (Bandura, 1997), which ties into the idea of developing mechanisms for students to build self-confidence and a belief that they can overcome obstacles. Expanding on Maslow's and Bandura's theories, Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory states that there are essential building blocks of well-being. Thus, happiness is within everyone's reach, and skills such as resiliency and empathy are can be learned (Seligman, 2018). These theories provide essential insight into understanding human development's psychological map and the implications that lead to cognitive, social, and emotional growth and well-being.

Maslow's Theory of Personal Development and Fulfillment

Maslow's theory of personal development and fulfillment is grounded in the idea that people are essentially motivated by five primary categories of needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). A five-tiered pyramid is often used to depict that hierarchy of

human needs. The pyramid's foundation comprises the essential physiological needs and the top of the pyramid, self-actualization, is accessed only once the other four needs have been fulfilled.

Maslow's theory concretizes education's role to ensure physical well-being, safety and stability, belonging, and autonomy to reach the ultimate goal of nurturing academic, cognitive, creative, and personal significance. Education often focuses on the top tier of Maslow's hierarchy without shoring up students' other needs and motivations, Maslow's lower tiers, which may indicate why educational efforts continue to be a losing battle.

Maslow's theory applies to an educational context. Teachers can obtain greater insight into what drives student behavior through the lens of Maslow's theory. For this study, Maslow's theory frames how teachers can help achieve optimum learning for their students by striving toward personal well-being and fulfillment. The first two tiers of Maslow's theory describe the basic physical needs, security and safety, of individuals, which teachers do not necessarily have direct control over per se. However, school policy initiatives have made efforts to meet these essential basic needs by providing schools with government funding and financial assistance for schools with a high percentage of children from low-income families (The Elementary Secondary Education Act, 2016). The food and resources provided by those funds ensure that essential, basic needs are met, which can allow students to have a chance to strive towards their more significant needs: belonging and personal fulfillment.

Applying Maslow's theory, teachers have a great deal of influence over the development of foundational human needs in the classroom, such as emotional safety and encouraging confidence. Seen through Maslow's theoretical lens, a teachers' purpose expands well beyond the scope of academic development to include meaningful ways they can make an impactful difference in their students' lives (Chen et al., 2015). The teacher's role is prioritized to include creating emotional belonging, developing prosocial skills to allow full participation in a healthy group dynamic, acknowledging students' efforts within their growth process, and embedding voice and choice within

the school experience, thus supporting students' learning journey in finding personal meaning and purpose in their learning experience.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory

While Maslow's theory frames meeting basic human needs as the early steps on a path towards personal fulfillment, Bandura's theory highlighted the social influences and how they impact our behavior. Bandura promoted the idea of self-efficacy, one's belief in one's ability to succeed (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's theory informs our understanding of the foundational teaching practices leading to the formation of self-determination or self-efficacy. Bandura's theory provides insight into *extrinsic* versus *intrinsic* motivation teaching practices, the ways teachers may promote social development, and the methods teachers use to create an environment of emotional well-being in the classroom setting (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2019; Weinstein et al., 2011).

Bandura's theory highlights the importance of developing emotional intelligence, such as self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, in teachers as much as students. To effectively apply Bandura's theory, a teacher's personal growth may not solely focus on themselves without also having the insight that their growth and development directly affect others, mainly their students. The idea that a teacher possesses the necessary influence to impact their classroom's social construct can be an empowering mechanism that leads to greater self-efficacy. Shaped by practices that lead to their potential role as critical influencers, educators can remain focused on their role in a child's development.

Bandura's theory places great importance on the social dynamics that create a classroom environment that is conducive to student learning and growth. In no way does Bandura's theory suggest measuring one's emotions, but recent research has shown that emotional intelligence can now, in fact, be measured (Mayer et al., 2016). The ability to assess an educator's emotional intelligence can potentially help identify where gaps exist in one's social-emotional competencies and create opportunities to develop those needed skills. Consequently, Bandura's theory has important

implications for teaching emotional intelligence so that teachers can grow their practice and evidence of that growth can be validated.

Martin Seligman's PERMA Theory

The field of positive psychology has been influencing the field of education for the past few decades. Seligman's PERMA theory has set forth a framework for education, which outlines the building blocks of wellness (Seligman, 1991, 2011). The focus on developing positive emotions, focusing engagement, building genuinely respectful relationships, seeking a meaningful and purposeful existence, and finding a sense of accomplishment and success in our lives is to the foundation of Seligman's theory (Seligman, 2011) and also at the very heart of SEL. In fact, Seligman states that PERMA can virtually integrate into the fabric of educational practices that form a new approach to SEL and character development (Seligman, 2018; White et al., 2015).

Seligman's PERMA theory is a strength-based model for change, which underpins the character values and emotional language addressed in this study (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The PERMA theory directly relates to this study, which seeks to understand the core SEL competencies that enable teachers to cultivate the optimum learning environment and instructional strategies to best support their students (Schleicher, 2011). Seligman's theory, one of personal growth and change, is based on the belief that people control some crucial aspects of their lives. This approach calls for individuals to act proactively and develop their ability to form positive relationships, find purpose and meaning in their life, and find things that make them feel engaged (Seligman, 2018). The PERMA approach leads individuals to feel pride in their accomplishments and adopt a positive perspective.

Implications of Theories

There is a common thread between the theories of Maslow, Bandura, and Seligman which drive this study: the value of (a) forming the healthy personal connections required for developing into fully functional adults, (b) modeling mutually respectful human relationships, (c) developing one's personal social-emotional growth and well-being, and (d) focusing on a strength-based approach to developing oneself within a healthy social context. These theories have implications regarding the

importance of the teacher's role and disposition in the classroom and the implementation practices that support student well-being and academic, social, and emotional growth.

The above theories imply that teachers, students, and school community stakeholders can simultaneously develop social-emotional competencies. In order to flourish both individually and communally, the theories promote the benefits formed through various actions, including explicit positive role modeling, the purposeful development of healthy teacher-student relationships, explicitly teaching prosocial behavior and creating systems to ensure community wellness (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018; Sanderse, 2013; Sternszus & Cruess, 2016). Collectively, the theories form a foundational understanding of the optimal school environment and primary relationships needed to support how children learn best (Vygotsky, 1978; Watson & Ecken, 2019).

Review of the Scholarly Empirical Literature

This section begins with a look at teacher and student social-emotional competencies and student-teacher relationships (STRs). The chapter continues with findings on teacher self-efficacy and the importance of teachers' social-emotional competencies related to cultural competence and culturally responsive practices. There are sections on the function of classroom culture (creating belonging and connection) and teacher retention as it relates to social-emotional competencies. Finally, there are sections that explore the policies, programs and practices that drive social-emotional learning implementation. The chapter concludes with a conceptual framework based on the empirical literature.

Teachers' Social and Emotional Competence

There is now significant research highlighting the relationships between social-emotional competencies during early childhood and academic success outcomes, mental health, and general well-being (Zins, 2004). Prior to 2003, there was limited research on teachers' emotional lives (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Research has shown that teachers may react differently to students' behaviors, depending on whether the teachers have social-emotional skills to cope and respond effectively (Sutton, 2004). Currently, there is growing body of research that shows that teachers who have

developed emotional competence, emotional intelligence, and mindfulness-based coping strategies can better support students in the development of their academic, social, and emotional skills (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Garner et al., 2018; Grant 2017; Herrmann & Gallo, 2013; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Martínez, 2014; Mayer et al., 2008, 2016; Saklofske, 2014; Wurf & Croft-Piggin, 2015). Thus, an emerging research field has focused on developing a greater understanding of teacher's emotional landscape in relationship to their responses to student behavior.

The ability for a teacher to support a student's emotional health may be compromised if the teacher's own emotional health has not been addressed (Dikel, 2014). Teachers come to the classroom with their own range of life experiences and coping mechanisms, which may be deemed both positive and negative; teachers may have experienced personal challenges and hardships, or experienced abuse or trauma. Teachers may be coping with mental health problems or may not have effectively developed interpersonal skills allowing them to advocate for themselves. Taking into account whether teachers have endured traumatic life experiences or are currently dealing with acute or chronic hardships is acknowledging the fact that teachers are human and have social-emotional needs. Subsequently, student mental health and well-being may start with the teachers' social-emotional competencies.

Limited studies exist highlighting programs that have effectively developed teacher SEL competencies (Jennings et al., 2017; Kimber et al., 2013). One study revealed that teacher well-being did influence their ability to effectively help students with mental health needs (Sisask et al., 2014), while a program called the Gordon method has been reported leading to improved teacher SEL competencies (Talvio et al., 2013). One research study showed promising results for developing teacher SEL competencies (Jennings et al., 2017). Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE for Teachers) is a mindfulness-based professional development program designed to promote teachers' social and emotional competence and improve classroom interactions. The program was assessed in a study that included 224 teachers and involved 30 hours of in-person training and phone coaching. Analyses showed that CARE for Teachers had statistically significant

positive effects on emotion regulation, mindfulness, and psychological distress. The findings indicate that CARE for Teachers is a significant professional development for promoting teachers' social and emotional competence and increasing their classroom interactions. This study indicates that teacher SEL competencies can be developed and effect positive change in SEL implementation (Jennings et al., 2017). Understanding how teachers prepare to respond effectively to students' emotional states and mental challenges is one of the questions explored in this study.

Student Social and Emotional Competencies

In a groundbreaking meta-analytic review of SEL programs across diverse student outcomes, students exposed to an SEL intervention demonstrated enhanced SEL skills/attitudes (e.g., motivation), positive social behaviors, and less emotional distress when compared to a control group (Durlak et al., 2011). Furthermore, academic performance was significantly improved, with an 11% point difference between groups on standardized scores (Durlak et al., 2011). More recently, studies relating to social-emotional competence to academic success have also shown significant effect in high school students (Akbaribooreng et al., 2015). The studies have shown benefits to students of all ages, which reveals the value of applying SEL across K-12 grades rather than just focusing on implementing SEL in the younger years.

Research findings suggest that all students benefit from teachers who have developed their SEL skills and that a teacher's SEL skills can improve the negative impact of a student's lack of self-regulation on their academic development (Durlak, 2015; Greenberg et al., 2003; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Oberle et al., 2016). One study identified special education students served in the general education population to improve student self-regulation, using teachers as the solution. The research suggests that teachers can increase students' self-regulation by becoming more fluent in teaching SEL through specific systematic curriculum and also by modeling prosocial behavior (Korinek & DeFur 2016). Korinek and Defur (2016) found that when a teacher systematically uses self-regulation and self-assessment, combined with a personal willingness to review and revise one's practices, they can promote self-regulation for students with disabilities. The key findings suggested

that general and special education teachers can create classrooms that scaffold student self-regulation and, ultimately, greater student success in the general education curriculum by modeling and explicitly teaching the skills they wish their students to learn. This study provides greater insight into the impact general education teachers have on special education and regular education students.

Today, one in five students exhibits clinical symptoms related to anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, and other mental health-related illnesses (NIMH, 2019). The impact mental health has on students' ability to attend to cognitive tasks, access their full cognitive capacity, and internalize and externalize behaviors directly affects academic achievement and development (Atkins et al., 2010; Dikel, 2014; Franklin et al., 2012). Teachers are required to address a gamut of student challenges, which includes this decline in mental health in students in Grades K-12 (Oberle et al., 2016).

The need to include mental supports for students is significant. At the same time, research studies have shown that students' emotional intelligence and social competence related to academic performance in middle and high school students continue to be less critically addressed (Akbaribooreng et al., 2015; Domitrovich et al., 2017; Wentzel, 1993). The research evidence shows that addressing a student's mental health, while at the same time building up a student's emotional competencies, can have a transformative impact on their well-being and academic achievement (Dikel, 2014).

Merging Teacher and Student Competencies into a Unifying Perspective

Teachers who see themselves as role models of social skills notice that their students exhibit greater intrinsic motivation (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2019). Teachers have also noticed that when they embody a growth mindset and teach students how to develop their growth mindset, students show increased self-efficacy (Dweck, 2014). Teachers recognize that students must develop these skills, all of which are vital dispositions to work towards as developing towards adulthood and building their social-emotional competencies (Allen et al., 2017; Altan et al., 2019; Zee et al., 2016). Teachers

who are explicitly taught and capable of effectively implementing an SEL approach can drive their teaching and learning more effectively.

Findings on Teacher Self-Efficacy

A teacher's ability to have insight into their self-efficacy and develop skills to improve social-emotional competencies is a factor in students' development of SEL skills (Sahin, 2017). Mayer et al. (2008) revealed that some individuals have a greater capacity to navigate the challenges of stressful events, persevere when faced with dynamic interpersonal relationships, and exhibit overall traits associated with happiness and optimism. Individuals who exhibit emotional intelligence show traits related to coping skills, high self-esteem, and behaving in a prosocial manner, all of which are essential variables in personal success and well-being (Sahin, 2017). However, the latest research reveals that teachers must develop social-emotional competence to promote the skills they are trying to develop in their students. Those students are shown to be at a significant advantage when their teachers exhibit social-emotional competence (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Martínez, 2014). With the research that shows teachers' own SEL skills directly affect student learning, it compels us to understand better how those SEL skills are developed for adults as much as students.

In one study on teacher self-regulation, teachers reported that by developing and using strategies to regulate their emotions, they could reach their teaching goals (Sutton, 2004). Teachers use a variety of preventative and responsive emotional regulation strategies to help them regulate their emotions. For example, one preventive strategy is for a teacher to choose to teach a younger grade level because they enjoy that development age and can anticipate connections between themselves and the students' being positive. In contrast, a responsive strategy might be using "self-talk," allowing a teacher to remember that the student may be having a challenge and not take their behavior personally. The research showed that teachers had a challenging time reacting using emotional strategies, and only one of the teachers reported identifying a strategy that was effective in helping them respond to emotion. This study indicated that teachers lack SEL strategies when addressing student behavior in the classroom in real-time (Sutton, 2004).

For this study, the focus is on the teachers' SEL competencies and how they may benefit students. The frameworks for SEL competencies apply to both students and teachers (CASEL, 2012).

Cultural Competence and Culturally Responsive Practices

Research has shown that SEL and culturally responsive practices promote greater academic achievement, increase student well-being and have protective factors against anxiety, depression, and other mental health-related conditions in our student populations (Durlak et al., 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Wentzel, 1993; Zins, 2004; Zins et al., 2007). In a 2019 Pew Research Study, children from racial and ethnic minority groups were projected to comprise 52.9% of public K-12 students. That is a sharp increase from 1995, when ethnic minority groups accounted for just 35.2% of these students. Comparatively, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that about 80% of public school educators are White females ((Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). Notably, that is a sharp contrast in students' cultural representation and presents challenges concerning cultural competency. Cultural competency allows educators to appreciate a range of cultural differences and empowers them with the ability to appreciate diverse perspectives (Hammond, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2011).

The theory of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) has been at the forefront of the social justice framework for decades. CRP has deemed the much-needed support for sustainable practices that continue to provide minority students with academic achievement and teachers' cultural competence and critical consciousness to support all learners (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Furthermore, teachers' perceptions about building students' SEL competencies may stem from their bias towards students struggling with mental health issues and poverty (Dell'Angelo, 2016). Teachers may blame students' problems on their circumstances and remove themselves from the responsibility of having to give students the social-emotional tools to deal with those circumstances. This points to an ethical responsibility that educators have to build their SEL competencies to ensure that students receive the maximum benefit to function within their community with the highest level of social-emotional competencies.

Teaching SEL is essential to developing a student's ability to develop SEL skills, empowering them with emotional insight into building positive relationships, and developing positive mental dispositions and strategies to cope with stress. Developing culturally competent teachers is critical to narrowing the achievement gap. Teachers can benefit from being provided with resources and tools to imbue their practice with strategies to be responsive to their students' needs and employ a pedagogical approach to create the ideal environment for learning (Lewis Chiu et al., 2017). Different cultures define mental health and mental illness differently. Educators need to be sensitive to the cultural perspectives of these student populations when it comes to school-based interventions (Graves & Castro-Olivo, 2018).

Research has shown that developing cultural proficiency, or cultural competency, allows for greater compassion and understanding of the mental health needs of different populations, but the SEL curriculum and strategies employed to address those students' needs remain constant (Durlak et al., 2011). Therefore, it is valuable to identify ways teachers can understand cultural differences surrounding emotional expressiveness and develop a comfort level discussing emotionally charged topics that deal with people's feelings.

Classroom Culture

Belonging and Connection

Teachers play a vital role in nurturing a positive classroom culture and are responsible for creating a classroom community where students feel a sense of belonging (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Ford, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014). A positive classroom climate and culture has been shown to promote student academic, social, and emotional success, and it can also influence a teachers' stress level and overall job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2011; Collie et al., 2015). A positive classroom culture sets the stage to promote social-emotional competencies, important life skills, such as problem solving, empathy, and cooperation (McAllister & Irvine, 2002). McAllister and Irvine's study (2002) explored teachers' beliefs regarding the role of empathy with culturally diverse students. The teachers defined empathy as the ability to show compassion and understand students' perspectives,

both of which promotes positive school culture. In that study, teachers reported reflecting on their own cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that may influence their behaviors manifested in their practice, and they determined that empathy and classroom culture are strongly linked. This study's results underscore the importance of creating contexts in which teachers use and nurture empathetic dispositions and behaviors.

Teacher Retention and Burnout

The literature review so far in this chapter has focused on understanding how teachers can build their SEL competencies through personal growth via their self-discovery or via teacher preparation programs. The prior sections also explored how SEL implementation impacts a teacher's ability to provide a positive environment and the importance of explicitly teaching SEL with fidelity. Subsequently, the prior sections' research was critical to show how teachers' social and emotional competencies may have an essential role in teacher burnout and teacher retention. This section addresses the research on teacher burnout connected to teachers' social-emotional competencies.

Teacher burnout is a serious problem that is on the rise (Zimmerman, 2018). The school environment's potential stressors that lead to teacher burnout include discipline problems, time pressure, low student motivation, and a teacher's not feeling valued for their efforts (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Additional factors that lead to teacher burnout include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). To date, studies on teachers' stress and burnout have primarily centered on teachers' characteristics and behaviors, but one study (Shen et al., 2015) investigated the relationships between teachers' burnout and students' motivation. One significant implication of that study concerning SEL teaching and learning may be teacher burnout and retention, which has become an increasingly challenging problem for new teachers (Oberle et al., 2016).

Over one semester's physical education classes, Shen et. al. (2015) showed that that teachers' perception of their burnout was a significant external factor associated with students' quality of motivation (Shen et al., 2015). This study sought to understand how the coping strategies,

disposition, and tools teachers employ to cope with stress could affect both teacher burnout and student motivation. Emotional exhaustion and time pressures were shown to be strong predictors of teacher burnout (Shen et al., 2015). This study is consistent with similar studies that explored the relationship between teacher's ability to cope with stress and student control. There also seemed to be a connection to stress levels that a teacher experiences and how much control they feel they have to effect change in their environment (Baloglu, 2008). These findings indicate that the perception of teachers' lived experience and belief about how they are coping with their stress affect student behavior and motivation.

Brackett et al. (2010) have extensively studied how one's ability to regulate emotion, burnout, and job satisfaction affects teachers and has found that the greater the emotional regulation, the more likely teachers will not burnout, leading to a higher level of job satisfaction. The research supports this study's claims that there are direct implications for teachers who develop emotional intelligence, leading to greater well-being, which decreases the likelihood of teacher burnout (Pillay et al., 2005). In addition to addressing their student's needs, new teachers are faced with the challenge of addressing their emotional stressors.

Research has shown a link between classroom teacher burnout and morning cortisol in elementary school students. Students' physiological stress response was tested using their salivary cortisol (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). One study found that children's morning cortisol levels significantly varied between classrooms, and higher levels of classroom teacher burnout predicted the variability in morning cortisol (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). This research has shown some important nuances that reveal how there might be a greater correlation between teachers' occupational stress and students' physiological stress regulation than we previously understood.

Creating a learning environment where both students and teachers can learn to navigate their emotional stressors using mindfulness-based practices has shown significant implications for teachers and students (Garner et al., 2018; Grant, 2017). It is critical to identify the potential stress contagion in the classroom to address both teachers' and students' stress levels. Research shows

that stressful experiences release stress hormones, which directly impact brain areas engaged in learning, leading us to understand better why some students cannot fully access their cognitive potential or why they respond to stress with irrational responses (Bangasser & Shors, 2010). The ability to reduce stressors and reduce teacher burnout is a valuable question to be explored.

Preparation, Training and Support

In this study, I explored the preparation, training, and support teachers receive in social-emotional learning. Having educational policy that values a dual focus for teaching success, including academic rigor and SEL, is critical to preparing teachers and implementing SEL practices with students (Elias, 2009). Although there is much evidence to support SEL's benefits, there has yet to be a significant shift in how SEL is taught in teacher preparation programs (Martínez, 2014). There is also confusion surrounding what entity is dictating the standards as well. For example, The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council have merged with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation in 2014, making it difficult to obtain clear guidelines regarding standards, leaving the preparation institutions without clear guidance. So, the problem is that policy influences preparation programs, and without clear guidance, the development of social-emotional competencies and SEL remains vague.

California Preparation

The research revealed some gaps in the California state mandate to implement SEL relative to the California Elementary Subject Matter Preparation Program (CTC, 2016). In the preparation program literature, SEL is not explicitly stated anywhere in the standards. The standards include *human development*; however, that term is not defined clearly, so the assumption is that they refer to children's overall psychological, physiological, and cognitive development. However, there is limited content information in each domain relative to the academic and cognitive standards outlined in the preparation program standards.

Furthermore, the domain standards merely require teachers to define basic concepts, describe potential influences, and briefly acknowledge the need to apply social and physical development

knowledge. In California's Social Emotional Core Education Document guide (CDE, 2018), there is extensive information describing the guiding principles of SEL, as well as SEL competency standards, perspectives of equity, school environments for SEL, and professional standards for school leaders. The disconnect is that educational policy in California recommends adopting SEL practices; however, California does not revisit the standards embedded in the teacher preparation programs that outline or give specific recommendations on meeting these standards, thus leaving it up to the teacher preparation programs, the in-service experiences, or the individual to obtain these critical skills.

Teacher preparation programs can be guided to develop a method of instilling SEL in their teacher's practices by following the Teaching Performance Expectations (TPE's), which aligned with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. These expectations guide teacher preparation programs and can be considered when determining ongoing teacher in-service by school leaders. The program standards address SEL aspects in three of the six learning domains, but overall the bulk of the standards address students' cognitive and academic needs. Seemingly, the narrative emphasizes cognitive and academic needs as a priority over SEL standards. Unless California does not require teacher training programs to address SEL and culturally responsive practices more extensively and explicitly, teachers may feel challenged to develop their social-emotional competencies and implement SEL with fidelity. Based on the research, there seems to be a lack of clarity in enacting these requirements and articulating whose responsibility it is to ensure that SEL is being implemented once teachers reach the classrooms.

Developing Teachers' SEL Competencies

The research regarding SEL in preservice programs found it challenging to identify specific, explicit curricular or programmatic practices being employed. In California, teacher preparation programs follow the TPE guidelines (Preliminary Multiple and Single Subject Credential Program Standards, 2015). These guidelines primarily focus on pedagogically sound best practices related to academic or cognitive development rather than developing teachers' social-emotional competencies (Raicevic et al., 2017). A major component of preservice teachers' preparation is to pair them with a

cooperating teacher expected to model best practices. However, the quality of these pairings and the support for preservice teachers have often not effectively supplied new teachers with the modeling or support they need to be effective once they enter their own classrooms (Roberts et al., 2014). The lack of effective modeling does not address the goal of building capacity in teachers, nor does it further develop a feeling of capability.

Studies have shown that cognitive ability, personality traits, emotional intelligence, knowledge, beliefs, and motivation play essential factors in instructional quality (Baier et al., 2018). Taking a closer look at how to develop teacher SEL skills and determine what gaps there are in teacher social, emotional competencies has led researchers to explore the relationships between emotional intelligence and teacher education programs (Corcoran & Tormey, 2012b). The research has shown that most preservice teachers do not have high EI levels when they begin their teacher preservice programs but can benefit from training to develop their EI if those programs are put into place. Individual personality is a predictor of academic achievement in secondary school students. Student SAT scores and GPA have been significantly higher when teachers embody traits such as openness and consciousness, both under the umbrella of social-emotional competencies (Noftle & Robins 2007).

Also, teacher preparation programs can significantly benefit from embedding mental health curriculum into their programs to better prepare them for identifying mental health concerns and providing proactive interventions that can improve student well-being (Rodger et al., 2014). Looking at classroom management through a social-emotional lens offers us a greater appreciation for the far-reaching effects SEL may offer teachers and the authoritative approaches that promote greater classroom management (Norris, 2003). Compared to ineffective classroom management methods, such as permissive or authoritarian practices, SEL allows teachers to empower students within a democratic setting, complete with boundaries, clear guidelines, and explicit expectations.

Whether teachers can implement SEL in the classroom is an area of great concern because it ultimately impacts student learning (Garner et al., 2018). Teachers who are adequately prepared as

preservice educators to begin their careers with their own set of SEL competencies and mindfulness practices are better prepared teachers who can develop relationship-based skills to connect with culturally diverse students (Lewis Chiu et al., 2017; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Unfortunately, preservice educators do not receive significant SEL training during their program. They are reliant on learning those skills within their schools via coaching, in-service, or professional development (Hurlbut & Tunks, 2016).

Alan et al. (2019) found that teachers can develop their social-emotional capacity by developing teacher dispositions and habits of mind. However, teachers who lack sufficient training in their teacher preparation program or begin teaching lack a significant opportunity to grow their social-emotional learning skills (Altan et al., 2019). Their study suggested that by developing their toolbox of strategies, teachers can then model the dispositions they are looking to instill in their students.

Preservice teacher preparation in the United States has mainly occurred at institutions of higher education. The United States has approximately 26,000 state-approved teacher preparation programs in operation across the country. Among these, about 70% are traditional teacher preparation programs contained within schools of education at higher education (Kuenzi, 2018).

Teacher preparation programs in California follow the TPE guidelines for the Preliminary Multiple and Single Subject Credential Program Standards, which primarily place the focus on pedagogically sound best practices related to academic or cognitive development rather than on developing teachers' competencies (Raicevic et al., 2017). Credentialed teacher mentors are expected to model best practices in a classroom setting; however, the quality of these models can vary (Raicevic et al., 2017). Research has shown that preservice teachers' support has often not effectively supplied new teachers with the modeling or support they need to be effective once they take on their classrooms (Roberts et al., 2014). The lack of effective modeling does not address the goal of building capacity in teachers, nor does it further develop a feeling of capability. The opposite effect may very well be at play, instilling feelings of inadequacy on the teacher's part.

The focus on developing teachers as pedagogically sound practitioners has been the primary focus of teacher preparation programs. However, research has shown that cognitive ability, personality traits, emotional intelligence, knowledge, beliefs, and motivation also affect instructional quality (Baier et al., 2018; Corcoran & Tormey, 2012a). Types of personality are predictors of academic achievement in secondary school.

Also, research has shown that teacher preparation programs can significantly benefit from embedding mental health curriculum into their programs to better prepare them for to identify students with mental health challenges and to instill proactive interventions that can improve student well-being and classroom management (Rodger et al., 2014). SEL provides teachers the tools to empower students within a democratic setting, complete with boundaries, clear guidelines, and explicit expectations.

In a study to determine whether teachers held positive dispositions to succeed in the teaching profession, teachers rated themselves as having a healthy emotional state and positive personality (Ripski et al., 2011). Identifying a good fit for the teaching profession can be a valuable metric to determine whether preservice teachers can benefit from additional SEL training. A span of studies have reviewed teacher competencies before their training program, learning objectives during their program, and the environment of learning in which they are placed to implement SEL effectively. New teachers are aware of how their social-emotional competencies impact their SEL classroom implementation, and they desire to develop their skills to better their students' academic and social-emotional needs (Poulou, 2018; Sahin, 2017). However, the gap in practice is that a teachers' desire to practice SEL and develop those competencies for themselves to teach SEL to students confidently may be challenging when they have not first yet developed them independently.

SEL training for teachers in preservice leads to increases in the likelihood of effective SEL implementation (Palomera et al., 2017). There is significant evidence that SEL positively affects student academic, social, and emotional outcomes, so the attention to SEL implementation is also of

importance in this study. The next section of the chapter on SEL implementation builds on developing teachers' capacity.

SEL Implementation

When properly implemented, SEL not only prevents challenging behaviors from occurring but also produces the intended results of teaching students to build their social-emotional competencies for academic, social, and emotional growth (Domitrovich et al., 2015; Greenberg et al., 2003; Lendrum & Humphrey, 2012). The literature indicates that the implementation of SEL, the process by which SEL is delivered by teachers and received by students, is critical to students' gaining SEL competencies. The goal for an effective implementation leads to significantly better delivery outcomes and student outcomes. However, the research has shown that implementation is a challenging endeavor as there are multiple interconnected components related to SEL implementation. One of the common themes revealed in the research related to implementation is developing positive teacher-student relationships and how those relationships are often perceived better when teachers had received training and support (Malloy et al., 2015; Patrikakou et al., 2016). Additionally, this research builds a case for the need for the fidelity of implementation and notes the barriers that prevent effective implementation.

Whether teachers can implement SEL in the classroom is an area of great concern because it ultimately impacts student learning (Garner et al., 2018). In this section of the chapter, various factors that lead to effective SEL implementation are presented, including how STRs affect implementation.

Fidelity and Barriers: SEL Implementation

School-wide systemic implementation maximizes the benefits of SEL programming (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Oberle et al., 2016; Stephens & Vantassel-Baska, 2019). However, the research suggests that either the lack of adequate teacher training or teacher SEL development may be linked to implementation challenges and the ability to implement the SEL curriculum with fidelity. Several critical themes have emerged in the literature related to effective SEL implementation: the value of teacher-student relationships (Reeves & Mare, 2017) and the fact that the fidelity of implementation

matters as much as the teacher's disposition (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997; Ross et al., 2012). Concerning efforts made to address bullying problems in schools, SEL has become an important piece in the advancement of bullying prevention programs such as the "Steps to Respect" program that highlight SEL skills needed to counter bullying problems with SEL programming (Hirschstein et al., 2007).

The continuation of such practices as extrinsic motivational strategies that include rewards and punishments, which are counter to the benefits of SEL, has not been entirely eradicated from overall practices, including PBIS, which ultimately limits the fidelity of SEL implementation (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Stevenson & Markowitz, 2019; Swanson et al., 2019; Waajid et al., 2013). Rewards and punishments control student behavior through short-term manipulation, reinforcing the ideas that students need to be manipulated into learning and behaving rather than taking the time to teach them how to manage their own behavior or giving them the skills to succeed. The problem may be that teachers have not been introduced to ways of using SEL other than what has been taught to them in preservice programs or modeled for them in their fieldwork experiences.

Research has shown that teachers may feel inadequate to address the needs of students exhibiting mental health challenges or SEL behaviors identified with special education students (Manrique et al., 2019). The research further indicates that teacher SEL limitations can prevent them from effectively implementing SEL in a general education classroom that expects inclusive, fair, and equitable practices. The research findings also have revealed barriers to the implementation of SEL. Prevalent barriers cited in the literature show that SEL is not often integrated into the general education environment, which is problematic for English language learners, who greatly benefit from language development as well as social skills (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). Research has shown that teachers in inclusion classrooms, classrooms that include general education and special education students, may feel inadequate to address students' needs, especially students exhibiting mental health challenges or behaviors typically identified with special education students (Manrique et al., 2019).

Prevalent barriers cited in the literature included focusing SEL solely on students with special needs and not providing English language learners or students historically marginalized students with SEL (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). The stigma that SEL is for special education students or a teacher's perception that general education students do not require SEL in the same capacity has been shown to be one of the limitations in implementing SEL (Zins et al., 2007).

Student-Teacher Relationships: Base of Effective Implementation

A number of studies show the important role of teacher-student relationships on student well-being and academic success (Baker, 2017; Klem & Connell, 2004; Murray & Malmgren, 2005). There is strong evidence that teacher-student relationships lead to student success: higher student engagement, academic achievement, and nonacademic benefits, such as an increase in interpersonal skills and increased self-confidence (Baker, 2017; Klem & Connell, 2004; Murray, & Malmgren, 2005). One study surveyed elementary teachers and their students' perceptions of their relationships, which revealed that student academic skills were less closely linked to their academic difficulties and were more of a link to teacher-student relationships (Poulou, 2017). Studies with new teachers or teachers working with students in at-risk populations have shown that the teacher's and student's relationship quality and the teacher's ability to cope with their stress may greatly contribute to their ability to develop those relationships (Baker, 1999).

When teachers leverage their relationships to promote SEL and develop a classroom built on cooperative relationships, teachers are more likely to strengthen STRs rather than create adversarial relationships where a student rejects the teacher's efforts to support them (Alderman & Green, 2014). Nelsen and DeLorenzo (2010) suggest that inviting teachers to consider how their methods of connection, style of questions, affect, tone of voice, and belief about the child's behavior works towards building mutually respectful relationships. Teachers who develop relationships with students using authoritarian control methods will often use rewards and punishments to manage student behavior, but Nelsen & DeLorenzo (2010) indicates that this prevents students from developing their self-efficacy and problem-solving skills (Nelsen & DeLorenzo, 2011).

Nelsen's approach, called Positive Discipline, is a relationship-based and solution-focused approach built on mutual respect, democratic values, and empowerment (Nelsen & DeLorenzo, 2011). This approach is an example of giving teachers the tools to develop their social-emotional competencies while also implementing SEL and helping students develop their social-emotional competencies. Requiring teachers to systematically teach students how to follow through with agreements, effectively communicate, practice empathy, and build communities of respect may lead to greater classroom harmony, laying the foundation for all other learning (Nelsen & DeLorenzo, 2011). The Positive Discipline approach is an example of how the process in which we implement SEL via our choice of words, affect, and dispositions can also be an important variable affecting implementation.

Research has found a variety of strategies that teachers can use to build a connection with their students. Some of the strategies are quick check-ins that invite superficial connection, while some strategies tend to create deeper, more emotionally connected relationships. In both instances, the goal is to find pathways to build teacher-student relationships. In one study on greeting students at the door, it was discovered that even a simple shift in connection strategies, such as that effort to greet students, could change the perception of teacher-student relationships, which affected the level of student engagement (Cook et al., 2018). Those impactful teacher-student relationships also build protective factors for student misbehavior and difficulties (Poulou, 2018).

However, over time there have been challenges with the instrument tools used to study STRs as well as an agreed-upon definition of what qualifies as good STR (Phillipo et al., 2017). More recently, studies have revealed that the tools used to study STR need to be refined to gather more valid data that shows more specific correlations between students' and teacher's behaviors and how those behaviors impact STR (Phillipo et al., 2017). Additional hurdles to developing empowering relationships may also be due to the teacher's fear of losing control over students' behavior, impacting classroom management style (Baloglu, 2008). An authoritarian style of teaching can create barriers to teacher-student relationships built on trust. Teachers' use of the ability to leverage social

relationships and develop authoritative relationships with their students rather than authoritarian-based relationships is often based on fear and hierarchical relationships.

Teachers play an important role in how STRs develop. The misuse of teacher power to coerce or manipulate students can have consequences that are not readily apparent when viewing academic skills alone (Alderman & Green, 2011). It is challenging to require students to behave appropriately without developing a genuine relationship built on mutual respect. Developing an understanding of the root cause of behavior is an important starting point in a teacher's ability to know how to respond to the behavior. For this review, the overall basis for SEL is to develop STRs. The strategies for classroom management that build life skills and well-being for students is important to understanding how to build empowering classroom management styles.

The School Counselor's Role in SEL Implementation

School counselors have historically been charged with providing student mental health interventions and supports. Yet, teachers are now tasked with responding to student's mental health needs as there are simply not enough quality school counselors in schools to handle the high demand for addressing mental health issues that arise daily (Marsh, 2016). With the onset of RTI, teachers have been tasked with implementing best practices and essentially providing support and interventions to assist a child socially, emotionally, and academically before moving forward with a request for a counselor intervention or an IEP assessment. This is important because there is perhaps a gap between what teachers believe is their domain and how they perceive the role the school counselor plays in facilitating social-emotional learning. As teacher training research points out, teachers are now trained in areas once relegated to school counselors or psychological interventions outside the general educational environments. One can see how this shift in thinking from the teacher's end can cause pause when intervening in students' social-emotional matters. Research has shown that students could benefit from therapeutic cognitive-behavioral interventions that teachers can effectively use in their classrooms to prevent or improve mental health problems and disorders (Paulus et al., 2016). However, these kinds of interventions take training and would

require teachers to implement them even if the protocols and processes had not been introduced in advance.

Juxtaposed with school counselors' implementing SEL, in a study conducted by Franklin et al. (2012), teachers effectively used school-based mental health interventions while working collaboratively with other professionals to provide services. Franklin et al. discovered that teachers could significantly impact interventions in the general education environment at the Tier 1 level as described by the RTI framework. When teachers make efforts to implement strategies and the student does not show improvement, deploying school mental health professionals may be beneficial (Paulus et al., 2016). The author contends services teachers can be impactful in providing these services, which will help improve the delivery of services and promote better mental health outcomes. This study was a meta-analysis of 49 school mental health studies. The results indicated that teachers were delivering a significant amount of interventions, actively involved in 40.8% of mental health interventions evaluated, and were the sole providers of interventions in 18.4% of the studies. It also found that many of these school mental health interventions took place in the classrooms. The Paulus study indicates that teachers can be impactful in providing mental health interventions. More specific research can identify what kinds of interventions are most effective and at what point teachers, in preservice programs or during in-service professional development, are trained to deliver these kinds of interventions.

Coaching Model: From PBIS to SEL

The study of PBIS implementation can provide insight into ways in which SEL implementation can best be accomplished. Bethune's (2017) study on the effects of coaching on teacher's PBIS implementation showed that coaching strategies supported greater fidelity after the coaching occurred. The researcher believed that teachers would develop greater skills that would positively impact the students' mental well-being and classroom behavior with specific professional development support and one-on-one coaching. Results indicated that there is a relationship between coaching and improved fidelity scores. There were significant indications that coaching can help

students and needs to be taken into consideration when making a plan to implement SEL interventions. My research directly is seeking to better understand the process of developing teacher skills and competency.

Teacher-Student Mental Health and Well-Being

Students are continuing to exhibit an increasing degree of mental health issues that significantly impact academic achievement and social-emotional well-being (NIMH, 2019). However, in general, primary and secondary teachers do not view students through a lens of mental health challenges (Kliebard, 2004). When a student exhibits internalizing or externalizing behavioral challenges at school, which range from minor to major disruptions in learning, there is a wide range of how teachers respond to problems, which is often dependent upon the teacher's own belief in their self-efficacy (Zee et al., 2016). Ignoring student psychological well-being results in a high level of teacher burnout, thereby creating a discouraging pattern for both students and teachers alike (Brackett et al., 2010). Students as young as elementary school show signs of mental issues in the form of anxiety, depression, ADHD, and suicidal ideation (NIMH, 2019).

Teachers have the opportunity to address the mental health needs of students by providing them the tools to build emotional well-being, and in doing so place a higher value on their state of well-being, both of which can bring about greater mental health outcomes in their students as well as themselves (Dikel, 2014; Durlak, 2015; Ross et al. 2012). Simply put, one can say that people do better when they feel better, and when a person's mental state is healthy, they can access their best cognitive and interpersonal selves (Nelsen, 2006).

With the recognition that there is a large cultural difference concerning mental health, schools' critical role is to destigmatize mental health issues across minority communities by universally implementing SEL. Non-White communities tend to not reach out for mental health services as much as White students (Atkins et al., 2010). To address this stigma around mental health, schools can provide information about brain development, normative statistics, and mindfulness practices that can give the minority group access to the dominant culture's understanding of mental health (Dikel, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

Research shows that when students are provided with a supportive school environment that is embedded with SEL, they flourish academically, socially, and emotionally (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Durlak et al., 2011). For students to receive SEL, teachers benefit from having the competencies to model, nurture, and implement SEL to their students (Corcoran, 2012a; Baloglu, 2008; Carlson, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). Therefore, the conceptual framework for the study is multi-faceted: The framework presented shows how a teacher's social-emotional, and cultural competence, training in SEL, and effective SEL implementation form a pathway that leads to a greater sense of teacher well-being and a decrease in teacher burnout. Furthermore, when teachers develop their sense of well-being and adequacy to implement SEL effectively, they can, in turn, positively develop student SEL competencies, increase student mental well-being and facilitate an approach to teaching and learning that has an overall greater impact on students social, emotional and academic success.

The conceptual framework that guides this study is presented in Figure 2. Ultimately, the benefits of teachers and students developing social-emotional competence can lead to greater academic achievement and mental well-being. The literature reviewed identified three core areas that teachers can have a direct impact on the development of student SEL competencies, mental well-being, and academic success: the benefits of developing teachers' SEL competencies, the value of infusing SEL training in preservice programs, and the need for effective SEL implementation in the classroom.

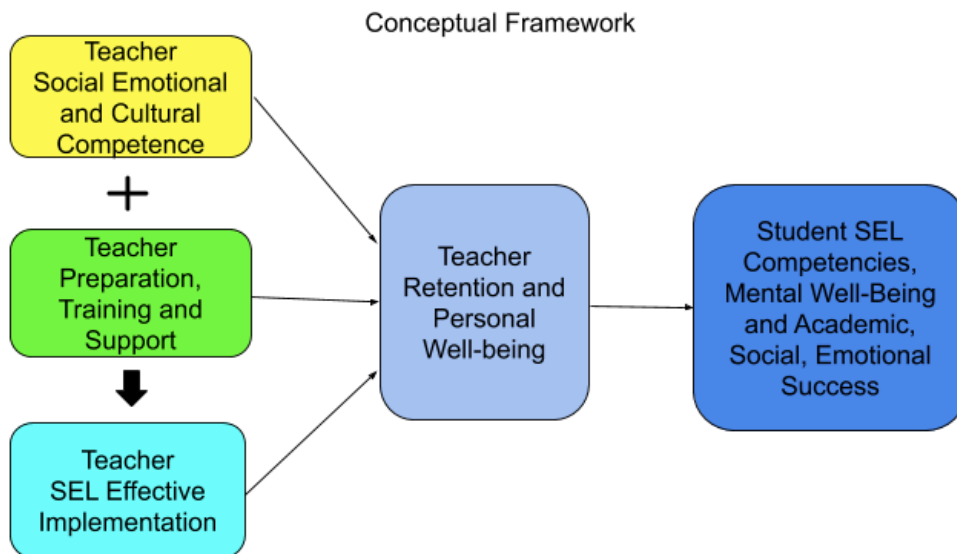


Figure 2. Teacher social emotional and cultural competence, teacher preparation, training, support, SEL implementation on teacher retention and student SEL competencies.

This study's research questions addressed whether teachers feel equipped to implement SEL and adopt strategies to develop their own social-emotional competencies. This research assumes that if these core competencies areas are addressed, this will increase teacher retention and personal well-being, positively impacting student well-being, benefiting students in their own social, emotional, and academic success.

Chapter Summary

SEL has emerged as an umbrella term for many concepts, including noncognitive development, character education, 21st-century skills training, and trauma-informed learning. More specifically, SEL has been identified as being the process of developing student emotional competencies, developing a classroom culture of emotional support, and creating effective prevention strategies against negative childhood emotional development (CASEL, 2012; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Elias et al., Klem & Connell, 2004, Payton et al., 2000).

There is currently a plethora of research to support the value of adopting SEL approaches in the classroom. However, the literature reviewed indicates that there is research emerging on the development of teacher SEL competencies, cultural responsiveness, and SEL effectiveness in training teachers in implementing SEL (Corcoran & Tormey, 2010, 2012; Donahue-Keegan et al.,

2019; Main, 2018; Stites et al., 2018). The literature review shows SEL competencies and implementation impact a teacher's ability to provide an optimal classroom environment.

Subsequently, the research in the prior sections was critical to showing the connection of how teachers' SEL competence, their experience in their preservice training programs, and the factors discussed regarding implementation may have an important role in teacher burnout and teacher retention. The literature reveals the value of developing teachers' social-emotional competencies and notes that developing teacher competency in teaching training programs and supported in schools may be a critical factor in supporting student growth.

Strategies or practical solutions for teachers to develop their own SEL competencies is limited in the research. Given that teacher's social-emotional competencies are critical for both teachers and students, understanding better how teacher competencies develop and are applied to teaching SEL warrants additional research. Therefore, this study explored the process by which teachers develop their SEL competencies via their own personal development, teacher training programs, or via SEL implementation.

Using a qualitative approach, this study addressed the efforts teachers are making to adopt and implement SEL to develop student SEL competencies and academic achievement, leading to well-being and academic success. An overview of the qualitative approach, using grounded theory, is provided in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD OF INQUIRY

This study used a qualitative methodology as it aimed to understand teachers' perceptions of their social-emotional competencies and how teachers' social-emotional competencies are applied to the practice of SEL. A group of teachers from K-12 share similar roles and responsibilities, which makes qualitative research an appropriate means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or a group of individuals ascribe to a social or human phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). With the challenges teachers face to meet students' academic, social and emotional needs, this study explores teachers' social-emotional competencies, their development of those competencies, and their perceptions of their process implementing SEL.

To answer the questions, I employed a qualitative study, conducting multiple sample interviews and reviewing social-emotional self-reflection assessments to triangulate the data. In this chapter, I first present the methodology for this study, including a discussion of its philosophical foundations. Next, I describe the research design within my selected methodological approach. Following the research design, I detail the specific research methods used in this study. This description includes information about the setting, sample, data collection, instrumentation and procedure, and data analysis, including validity/trustworthiness and the researcher's role. I conclude with a chapter summary.

Research Questions

The three essential questions posed in this study are:

1. What social-emotional skills, dispositions, and competencies do teachers and school administrators identify as important to teaching?
2. How, if at all, do teachers incorporate social and emotional learning into instruction and curricula?
3. What forms of teachers' social and emotional learning training, development, and supports are perceived as being most helpful to teachers working in K-12 schools?

Researcher Role and Positionality

Currently, I serve as the head of school at a private school that has been designated as a social-emotional learning Positive Discipline Lab school. I have been a Positive Discipline trainer within the Positive Discipline Association since 2015, training hundreds of public and private educators throughout California and the east coast. As a school leader in a Positive Discipline school, we employ an SEL approach embedded in our curriculum and culture (Nelsen, 2006). SEL is a foundational factor in our philosophical approach to teaching and learning. In this study, the teacher participants may see me as an authority figure with the potential to assess their competency level, while principal participants may see me in a collegial manner.

Before embarking on this study, I worked as a teacher training consultant and an elementary teacher for several years. While teaching first grade from 2009 to 2012, I adopted a comprehensive SEL approach called Positive Discipline (Nelsen, 2006). The two-day Positive Discipline training changed how I implemented discipline practices in my classroom. The Positive Discipline approach taught me skills on how to be more encouraging with my students and tips on how to create an intrinsically motivating learning environment. The tools I learned provided me with strategies to reduce common classroom behavioral problems, such as attention-seeking behavior and students' arguing. I later went on to get my administrative services credential so that I could train teachers in SEL.

Research Design

Qualitative research methodology was chosen due to its ability to perform inductive processes, enabling the researcher to analyze data and develop themes based on abstract concepts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A qualitative study's value is that any component of the design may need to be reconsidered or modified during the study in response to new developments or changes in any component, making the process of constructing and reconstructing research design a fluid process (Maxwell, 2005). The activities of collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory,

elaborating, or refocusing the research questions are ways of continually assessing how the design is working during the research process (Maxwell, 2005).

The inductive approach within the qualitative study focuses on specific situations or people and emphasizes thick narrative descriptions (Maxwell, 2005). As findings based solely on teacher self-reports may suffer from bias (Wubbels et al., 1992), the study also drew on school administrators' perceptions of teachers' social-emotional competencies. Using the reflections and descriptions from teachers and school administrators provided insight into understanding how teachers develop their social-emotional competencies and implement social-emotional learning.

For this study, collecting and analyzing data was thoughtfully attended to by assuring that the study addressed the questions being asked. The study design allowed for participants to fully share their perspectives and experiences. The problem this study examined was the relationship between teachers' social-emotional competencies and the impact on teacher well-being and student academic, social, and emotional development. The research questions of this study explored teachers' perceptions of their SEL competencies, what SEL experiences teachers' find valuable, and whether they believe that their prior training and professional development has supported SEL implementation. Teachers reflected on their comprehensive background knowledge in SEL to set students up for academic and SEL success. All participating teachers were currently working in either a self-contained public, private, or charter school classroom.

Research Methods

The following section describes the setting, participant sample, data collection, analysis, and management of the study. The study instrumentation, and procedures of the study including methods of validity and trustworthiness are discussed. Problematic methodological considerations are also explored.

Setting

My study setting included accredited primary or secondary public, private, and charter schools. The school sites were elementary or secondary schools that are open on a traditional or year-round

schedule. Due to the guidelines and protocols of COVID-19, schools were either traditional onsite, conducting classes remotely, or following a hybrid model, including both onsite and remote learning. Teachers were teaching in person at their school site or, due to COVID-19 restrictions, working remotely from their school site or in their homes. The total student populations of the school sites and student-teacher ratio of classroom sizes varied widely, as COVID-19 guidelines differed depending on local decisions.

Sample

The participants in the study included school site administrators and primary and secondary teachers. The participants have been prepared in various institutions, including public, private and online universities or colleges. Participants represent a diverse range of age and gender demographics, allowing for the questions being studied to incorporate a variety of voices in the research (Creswell, 2007). The teachers have received multiple-subject credentials or a single-subject credential and currently are certified to teach primary or secondary students. The school administrators have received their administrative services credentials and have been working as an administrator for a range of 1 to 17 years. The sample population included teachers who have been credentialed for a range of 1 to 25 years.

The target sample size of participants was a minimum of 10 kindergarten through 12th-grade teachers. Teachers were all currently employed full-time. Although the targeted number of participants was tentative, the point of saturation or redundancy of responses was considered in order to indicate that no significant new insights may occur through the interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I included school administrators to participate in the study only if there was also one of their teachers in the study. The number of school administrators interviewed depended on how many different school sites the teachers represented.

Ultimately, there were a total number of four administrators and 10 teachers, representing four schools who participated in the study. The administrator interviews were intended to help triangulate the data provided by the teacher interviews and teacher self-assessment reflection tool.

The participants for the study were introduced to the study via their school administrators. I sent out an email to the school administrators and requested that they recommend teachers as participants in the study. Before the research began, informed consent was obtained from the school administrators and teachers, who gave their consent for the interviews to be audio and video recorded. The teachers also agreed to take the teacher social-emotional competency assessment test. All the names (schools, teachers, school administrators and children) who are mentioned in the study instruments were replaced with codes (Table 1). All necessary measures were taken so that confidentiality and anonymity were secured throughout the research project.

Participants were notified that there was no direct benefit to them for being in this study. However, they were informed that the results of this study may help assist school administrators and policymakers in understanding how to better support teachers in developing their social-emotional competencies and implementing SEL in the classroom. There was no foreseeable risk to the participants' participation.

Data Collection and Management

The types of data I collected included interviews with school administrators and teachers and the personal social-emotional competency assessment tool for teachers (Yoder, 2014). There were two phases to the data collection process, with Phase 1 being implementation of the interview instrument and Phase 2 the reflective assessment tool for teachers. For this study, all the data gathered were triangulated by comparing evidence from multiple sources, including teachers, school administrators, and the teacher self-assessment protocol, and thematically analyzed for emerging themes (Creswell, 2007). Thematic analysis of the data involved categorizing the data by the research questions, and then the emerging themes were developed throughout the analysis. This process required a continuous review of the interview transcripts and self-assessment social-emotional tool to find patterns and themes and refine the themes.

The teacher social-emotional self-assessment tool (Yoder, 2014) was completed independently by each teacher following their interview and then emailed to me. The document was

reviewed and analyzed and used to triangulate the data. Data from the reflection tool was analyzed in aggregate. A rating system was created to analyze the reflection tool. Findings were noted as containing potential significance when three or more teachers provided self-report ratings in one of the two categories. Within the rating system, teacher responses fell into two broad categories considered by the researcher as significant: teachers who rated themselves as not implementing or struggling with SEL and teachers who rated themselves as performing well or extremely well with SEL practices.

Instrumentation

For this study, the instruments I used were face-to-face interviews with teachers and with the school administrators, as well as a social-emotional competencies assessment tool for teachers. There were two primary reasons for data collection methods: Interviews provided an overall picture of competencies before teaching and also developed a deeper understanding of current perceptions about SEL and implementation experiences. Social-emotional competencies tools were used as a way to enhance the interview and offer teachers an opportunity for deeper reflection related to the interview process.

The interview protocols for teachers and principals was an instrument that was created specifically for this qualitative study (Appendix B, Appendix C). The interviews consisted of one face-to-face Zoom session lasting on average of 45-60 minutes in length. The interviews took place as a Zoom meeting and was audio and video recorded. The interview questions were constructed to utilize a semi-structured interview protocol (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), which was specifically created for this study to answer the questions. Criteria for the interview questions was that they must be meaningful and reasonable for the specific study (Brantlinger et al., 2005). The interview questions were open-ended and worded so participants understand them and were relevant for the study's topic (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

The self-assessment social and emotional instruction and competencies tool for teachers (Yoder, 2014) was used in order to assist teachers in reflecting and assessing how well their teaching

practices support SEL. In the tool, teachers self-assessed 10 practices that support SEL for students. The tool included five teacher social and emotional competencies for users to reflect on, including self-awareness, self-management/emotion regulation, social awareness, relationship/social skills, and responsible decision-making. Although this study focused only on teachers' perception of their own social-emotional competencies, teachers took the entire self-assessment to retain the integrity of the tool. This tool allowed teachers the opportunity to reflect on their competencies after the interview was completed. The purpose of having participants complete the self-reflection tool after the interview was twofold: It was meant to allow participants time to think about their social-emotional competencies and to limit any potential bias while answering the interview questions.

Procedures

Interviews were conducted over Zoom during a prescheduled time selected by the participant. Prior to the interviews being conducted, participants signed a written consent waiver for their interview to be video and audio recorded. In keeping with the promise of confidentiality, participants were given pseudonyms that have no bearing on their given name or place of employment. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour. The audio recording from the Zoom interview were transcribed by an outside agency, which ensured accuracy of data transcription and subsequent analysis.

Following the teacher interviews, teachers completed a Social Emotional Self-Reflection tool, created by the Center on Greater Teachers and Leaders, (<https://gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/SelfAssessmentSEL.pdf>). All teachers who were interviewed completed the social-emotional reflection tool within that given time period. Data from the reflection tool was analyzed in aggregate. A rating system was created to analyze the reflection tool. Findings were noted as containing potential significance when three or more teachers provided self-report ratings in one of the two categories. Within the rating system, teacher responses fell into two broad categories considered by the researcher as significant: teachers who rated themselves as not

implementing or struggling with SEL and teachers who rated themselves as performing well or extremely well with SEL practices.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data was collected, transcribed, and analyzed using Dedoose, a data collection coding software system. Once interviews were transcribed and coded, data analysis began. Preliminary data analysis consisted of developing a coding system for the interview transcripts. Categories, themes, and concepts related to the study questions were developed. Following the first cycle of coding, the process of further reducing the existing codes, leading to groups or categories, allowed for reorganization and consolidation of meaning and began the process of finding patterns in the data. Raw data from the interviews was read and coded for categories that fell within the three research questions. There were 32 codes in all (Appendix F). One code that did not fall under the research questions was in reference to experiences related to COVID-19. Finally, thematic data analysis revealed meaningful patterns and emergent core themes were developed.

Specific steps occurred in order to execute the study. After IRB approval, school administrators were contacted via email to be invited to participate in the study. The school administrators were requested to assist me in sending out a recruitment email to invite their teachers to participate in the study (Appendix A), directing them to potential teachers to participate in the study. Participants email and/or phone contact information was either provided directly to me or participants sent directly to me via their principal. Once the school administrator shared teachers' emails, I reached out to the teachers with the prepared email inviting them to participate in the study. I told the teachers that there was no obligation for the teacher to participate and their identity as a participant will remain confidential with their principal. They were not made to feel coerced or obligated in any way to participate.

The self-assessment tool was scored and analyzed. Excerpts were sorted with a software tool and later data categorized with codes were analyzed for patterns and themes. A constant data analysis process was used with data analysis software and document analysis. Conclusions were

drawn based on the data analysis enhancing qualitative analysis's quality and credibility (Patton, 1999). The CASEL (2015) competencies were used to guide the data analysis process.

Procedures to Ensure Validity and Trustworthiness

Various factors may have impacted the implementation of SEL and thus study validity. For my study, I was solely focusing on (a) teacher social-emotional competencies, (b) the development of SEL practices, and (c) the educational environment in which teachers implement SEL. Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research was employed. There have been various SEL implementation challenges identified that can also lead to SEL implementation effectiveness. Some of the most noted implementation challenges include the following: applying and transferring skills, prioritizing and integrating SEL skills into daily practice, ensuring sufficient staff support and training, obtaining teacher ownership and buy-in, and using student data to inform decision-making (Oberle et al., 2016). To address these validity concerns, subject participants shared perspectives and experiences to understand the different implementation variables.

Problematic Methodological Considerations

Narrative reports on SEL from teachers provide only one perspective of what transpires in schools and classrooms. Teachers' perspectives need to be put in context compared to other perspectives, such as those of school administrators and also of students. This study leaves out the perspectives of students, who may have offered valuable understanding in their experience with respect to the teachers interviewed. Understanding SEL through multiple perspectives can provide valuable information regarding what additional factors contribute to teacher success in the implementation of SEL and the development of their own social-emotional competencies. However, a teachers' perspective is crucially important because they are driving the classroom culture and curriculum, and educational policies and practices yield the greatest results if they are effectively implemented.

Chapter Summary

The problem of addressing teachers' social-emotional competencies is critical to addressing students' future academic achievement and social and emotional development in Grades K-12. Understanding the SEL competencies of teachers entering the teaching profession, or of more seasoned teachers who have been in the profession for an extended number of years, identifies competencies that are being developed in teaching training programs or supported in schools. SEL competencies may impact how teachers teach and students learn. Learning more from the teacher's perspectives and experiences garnered a deeper understanding of where those critical gaps may be occurring. The implications for this study are that teachers may link SEL to teacher retention and their own capacity as individuals to develop competencies to support student learning and growth as well as lead a classroom to support a social context of celebrating democratic values and multicultural diversity. The next chapter will share the findings from the research questions asked in this study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand teachers' perceptions regarding their social-emotional competencies, how they perceive the development of those social-emotional competencies, and how teachers' competencies affect their SEL teaching practice. The research questions aimed to understand how teachers can best support their students' academic, social, and emotional needs while simultaneously ensuring that their own well-being is supported and professional goals are reached.

The study investigated what social-emotional competencies teachers perceive to be important, what professional learning takes place to help nurture SEL competencies, and how the social-emotional competencies of teachers are put into practice in their classrooms. This study analyzed the perceptions of teachers and administrators, using interviews and teachers' social-emotional reflection tool to address the following three research questions:

1. What social-emotional skills, dispositions, and competencies do teachers and school administrators identify as important to teaching?
2. How, if at all, do teachers incorporate social and emotional learning into instruction and curricula?
3. What forms of teachers' social and emotional learning training, development, and supports are perceived as being most helpful to teachers working in K-12 schools?

In this chapter, I describe relevant demographic data and provide examples of teachers and administrators definitions of SEL shared during the interview process. This is followed by a description of the findings from the teacher and administrative interviews conducted, and the responses from the teachers' social-emotional self-reflection tool. The findings are presented relative to the research questions asked. I present identified themes and trends developed from research interview protocols and the teacher social-emotional self-reflection tool (Yoder, 2014). I conclude my chapter with a synthesis of my findings.

Participant Recruitment and Demographics

Data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews with K-12 school administrators and teachers currently working in four different schools: one public, one private, and two charter schools. There was a total of six administrators who volunteered to participate in the study, all of whom are principals at their school sites. The administrator participants ranged in years of administrative experience from 1 year to 17 years. Administrators were asked to invite their teaching staff to participate in the study by sending out a recruitment email (Appendix A). Two of the six administrator interviews conducted were dropped from the study’s data set because they did not meet the requirements for participation (teachers from the same school site as the administrator were required to participate).

The participants included 10 teachers and four administrators from four school sites in different districts: one public school (K-6), one private school (K-12), and two charter schools (K-8). There were three teacher participants from the public K-6 school, three teacher participants from the private K-12 school, and two teacher participants each from K-8 charter school. Teachers’ years of experience ranged from 1 years to 23 years as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographics as They Relate to the Type of School, Administration and Teachers

	School A	School B	School C	School D
Type of School	Public	Charter	Charter	Private
Grades	K-5	K-8	K-8	K-12
Learning Type	Remote	Hybrid	Hybrid	In person
Admin label	A	B	C	D
Teacher label	1A, 2A, 3A	4B, 5B	6C, 7C	8D, 9D, 10D

Data Collection

When conducting qualitative research, the use of *thick description*, a term used to characterize the process of paying attention to contextual detail in observing and interpreting social meaning, is of great value (Mills et al., 2010). I used thick descriptive narrative excerpts as the primary method to present themes that were generated from the perceptions of participants. Thematic analysis of the data involved categorizing the data by the research questions, and then the emerging themes were developed throughout the analysis. This process required a continuous review of the interview transcripts and self-assessment social-emotional tool to find patterns and themes and refine the themes.

Themes that emerged from the preliminary phase guided the analysis of data collected. Participants were assigned a pseudonym for the notes, transcriptions of the interview, analysis, and reports. Preliminary data analysis consisted of developing a coding system for the interview transcripts. Categories, themes and concepts related to the study questions were developed. Following the first cycle of coding, the process of further reducing the existing codes, leading to groups or categories, allowed for reorganization and consolidation of meaning and began the process of finding patterns in the data. In all, 32 codes were created that fell under the three research questions. Finally, thematic data analysis revealed meaningful patterns and emergent core themes.

All teachers who were interviewed completed the social-emotional reflection tool. Data from the reflection tool was analyzed in aggregate. A rating system was created to analyze the reflection tool. Findings were noted as containing potential significance when three or more teachers provided self-report ratings in one of the two categories. Within the rating system, teacher responses fell into two broad categories considered by the researcher as significant: teachers who rated themselves as not implementing or struggling with SEL, as well as teachers who rated themselves as performing well or extremely well with SEL practices. Once interviews were transcribed and coded, data analysis began.

Teacher and Administrator Definitions of SEL

At the start of the interview, participants were asked to present their overall understanding of SEL in the school and classroom. The participants shared their understanding of what they believed the function of SEL to be and how it related to the school and classroom experience for themselves and their students. There was a range in responses to the interview questions concerning SEL.

Teachers and administrators described SEL in terms of student behavior and how it relates to their teaching and student learning and the relationships with their peers and teachers. More specifically teachers and administrators shared their understanding of SEL which was based on how students are regulating emotions, how they engage in their learning, and how students connect. Some participants described SEL as strategies to use to manage behavior while others noted curriculum or methods used such as brain-based learning.

Some teachers noted SEL as a means for student learning engagement and peer relationships.

Teacher 6C:

To help teach them how to transition those thoughts and emotions and whether they're feeling it or thinking it or acting it out, um, into, you know, just how to productively manage that. So, they can engage in the learning and engage in one another...the better the students can manage themselves and interact with one another, the more they're going to learn.

Teachers such as 4B used terms such as *compassion*, *connection* and the importance of *deep and meaningful* learning to describe the function of SEL.

Teacher 4B:

Compassionate connection and self-expression are huge, especially, um, the compassionate connection, not only that students have with each other and supporting that, but also supporting that connection, between teachers and students, because we believe that learning isn't nearly as deep and meaningful.

Administrators acknowledged the value of SEL for personal well-being and also concerning academic achievement.

Administrator C echoes other administrator comments in the interviews that referenced the importance of how SEL makes connections to learning and that it is considered the “precursor for all other learning.”

Administrator C:

Brain-based learning. You have to kind of tap into that, that emotional brain... number one, create safety, number two, create connections to content, create connections to each other. And so, I think social, emotional learning is first before anything... I think that the social and emotional are precursors to any kind of academic learning. So social and emotional wellbeing are precursors to any kind of critical thinking, academics.

Some teachers referred to SEL as a method of motivating students with the use of rewards or prizes, a way of implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

Teacher 8D:

I always remember they did a star-of-the-week type thing. And at the end of the week, all the students would write you are special because...I feel like that is a social-emotional thing because they're writing letters, but also they're thinking of qualities in other people that maybe they don't find in themselves and they really appreciate that and they want to write about it. So that's kind of where I remember some sort of social, emotional learning.

As a whole, the teachers and administrators reported a wide range of working definitions of SEL that included ideas around self-regulating emotions, compassion, motivation through rewards, peer and teacher relationships, and academic engagement.

SEL Themes Related to the Research Questions

The themes related to the three research questions regarding teachers' perceptions of social-emotional learning are summarized below under each of the broad research questions addressed in the study. The themes for the first research question included teachers modeling of SEL, the role of emotions, teachers' self-awareness of SEL skills, and cultural competencies related to SEL. The themes of the second research question included SEL practices related to STRs and student-student relationships. The themes from the third research question included preservice teacher training, professional development, teacher stress, SEL curriculum and teacher collaboration.

First Research Question

The first research question asked, “What social-emotional skills, dispositions, and competencies do teachers and school administrators identify as important to teaching?” During interviews, teachers were asked to share and reflect on what SEL strategies they use in the classroom that they may consider being helpful. After the interview, teachers completed the reflection tool where they were asked to reflect further on their SEL practices and rate themselves on the specific areas of SEL competencies they employ. Several themes emerged overwhelmingly from participants: (a) modeling social-emotional competencies, (b) the role emotions play when implementing SEL, (c) teacher self-awareness of SEL skills, and (d) a teachers’ cultural competency related to SEL.

Teacher Modeling of SEL

The first major theme that emerged concerned the need for adult modeling of social-emotional competencies for students during classroom instruction. Social-emotional modeling consists of a teachers’ ability to regulate their emotion throughout the day, including during times of stress, in a way that students could learn skills. Teachers would also model respectful communication strategies that students could utilize in their life. During the interviews, five of the participants described situations where they found it challenging to model social-emotional skills, specifically modeling emotional regulation. Three teachers and two administrator participants noted that when they were unable to model their social-emotional competencies, such as self-regulation or self-awareness, they would not feel prepared to teach it to their students or support their teachers. Several participants noted modeling as an important factor in teaching, but they reported that don’t have the tools to do so at this time. The administrators and teachers noted that most of the efforts to develop practices to help them model self-regulation were strategies that they have learned on their own, outside of teacher or administrator training.

Teacher 2A was quick to share their thoughts on how challenging it was to model and implement SEL. Several times throughout the interview participant 2A’s eyes welled with tears and

their voice waivered when reflecting on the challenge of modeling SEL when feeling stressed.

Teacher 2A shared their reflections on the frustrations of believing they know what they need to do but not having the ability to regulate their emotions during the times of stress when they know they need to do so for their students.

Teacher 2A:

You're constantly modeling. They're watching you. So how you treat them, if you're shaming them, then it doesn't matter what you do. And I just see so much shaming. Taking them out quietly, talking to them, getting down on their level, waiting, waiting to respond is so hard. And it's taken me so long to get to where I wait. But it makes such a difference as a new teacher. I couldn't wait to respond as a brand-new teacher, but over time I've learned to just wait to respond and waiting can make a huge difference. They can't hear you when they're upset. And you can't respond the way you want to respond when you're upset. So just wait.

Teacher 2A's reflection of the challenges they experienced as a new teacher trying to model SEL for their students versus the experience of being a seasoned teacher was noted. They also emphasized that implementing SEL is not going to be enough if the actions of the teacher do not reflect the lessons being taught.

Teacher 3A shared that they did not feel competent to model behaviors, such as using emotional language to communicate when they were feeling upset, but they expressed that they are doing the best they can do given what they believe they know. Teacher 3A reflected on the challenge of teaching skills to students and trying to "co-regulate" with them without knowing in fact how to do that for themselves. Furthermore, Teacher 3A recognized that understanding the "best method to help students regulate their feelings" would be beneficial to them. They went on to note that students who are exhibiting emotional challenges, such as depression and anxiety manifesting as sullen and withdrawn behavior, are the very students who need teachers to model effective communication and positive behaviors for them.

Both teachers and administrators shared similar comments regarding the need to model social-emotional competencies. Administrator D shared in detail the importance they felt adult modeling is for helping children to self-regulate and stated that "admin need to model it too." They noted that expecting students to exhibit behavior that adults are not exhibiting for them is a problem.

Administrator D went on to reflect on their development of self-regulatory behavior that they believe is helpful in modeling for others.

Administrator D:

If you are not in control, there's just no way you can expect a child to take control of the situation. I think you have to model it just like we ask parents to model the behavior for their children or teachers to model it for their kids. Like they're looking for admin to model it too. And I mean, people know when I'm like riled up. It doesn't mean that I'm perfect by any means. Like people can tell by my face. I think those who are using the SEL strategies and modeling, they see success. And I think the ones who are just following along, whatever the curriculum we've given are probably finding it challenging at the onset.

Administrator B also stated that modeling must begin with the adults and there are various strategies that they have adopted to help them model self-regulation including mindfulness practices.

Administrator B:

Implement it in your own life first. You have to understand where you're human and you have to, that's where mindfulness really comes in. I had this before I started practicing mindfulness, but the more I meditate, the more I realize or recognize the voice that's there, that's saying things that I don't necessarily have to listen to. Being aware of your own practices with other people. Like if you're asking children to do something, are you doing it in your life? I think the most important part of practicing is recognizing how important it is. If you don't, getting through a lesson is more important to you than how a child is feeling in that moment, then you have to look at that.

Another form of data about modeling came from the teacher social-emotional self-reflection survey tool (Yoder, 2014) that teachers completed after their interviews. In the tool, under the category of student-centered discipline of SEL practices, teachers rated themselves as generally implementing the practice well or extremely well of modeling strategies that will help students monitor and regulate their behavior. This finding from the self-reflection tool is contradictory to the interview responses that the participants shared.

The Role of Emotions

The role of emotions and how teachers' respond to their emotions through behaviors was a pervasive theme throughout the teacher and administrative interviews. Understanding basic emotions, such as anger, fear, pain, joy, passion, love, shame, and guilt were highlighted as an important factor in teaching SEL. Teacher participants noted the role of emotions in their teaching

practice, specifically concerning their capacity to emotionally regulate in the classroom and how they identify and express emotions to their students.

During the interviews, one of the administrators noticed how teachers' emotions fluctuate during the seasons, or time of the school year. Administrator C stated, "The ups and downs of emotions depends on the time of year or seasons" fluctuate from "always happy" to experiencing a "low mood" due to external factors, such as the weather. Administrator C further noted that we have to be happy but that there is awareness around the idea of being happy in an inauthentic way.

Administrator C:

People put labels on emotions. Sometimes when you're at that low point, there's not creativity because you're just trying to stay afloat...it's low mood in the winter, but, um, now that it's starting to lighten up, I can, I feel myself starting to lighten up a little bit. We have to make sure that we're always happy and, you know, there's that, there's that notion of toxic positivity that's going around right now.

Administrator D commented that, despite the effort to learn how to navigate emotions and have tools to control their emotions, it is still a challenge to regulate their emotions and efforts are being made to "recognize when (they are) flared up."

Administrator D:

I have to put it out there, even with all the years of doing this and the training and even becoming certified, like parent educator and all that, there are still times where you lose that control, that sense of self-regulation. But for me, it's been about constant exposure and I've of course looked into it much deeper than a lot of people...so for me, it has become a self-regulation tool for me and I am learning and how to recognize when I'm flared up, recognize like my own emotions.

Teachers' Self-Awareness of SEL Skills

Teachers were asked during the interviews to reflect on their self-awareness as related to social-emotional teaching practices. Additionally, teachers were asked in the self-reflection tool survey (Yoder, 2014) to rate their self-awareness of their own social-emotional practices on a 4-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The findings shown that six of the ten teachers rated themselves as having very strong skills in self-awareness and that they strongly agreed that they were aware of their emotions, understand how student responses affect their emotions and behaviors, and are aware of social teaching practices. During the interviews teachers and

administrators also shared their thoughts on self-awareness of their social-emotional teaching practice.

Teacher 4B:

I also will say too, that as somebody who's been teaching for like five or six years, somebody who's been an instructional coach, I'm feeling like I've put immense pressure on myself to sort of be able to walk the walk, you know?.

“Walking the walk” specifically references a teacher’s ability to model SEL behaviors, such as effective communication, self-regulation, and self-reflection skills, for their students, not just talk or teach about these skills. Teacher 4B noted that the pressure they feel to model the skills they are teaching their students is evident. Teacher 4B referred to wanting to embody the communication and self-regulation competencies they are trying to teach their students. In addition to walking the walk, teachers and administrators reflected more deeply on the type of person who can embody SEL competencies.

Administrator C:

I would say it requires vulnerability. You have to be willing to be vulnerable about how you're feeling about, like how you're really feeling about when a kid triggers you or when anybody triggers you... you have to be aware of what those triggers are. So, for me, it would be that level of self-awareness.

Teacher 1A shared their insight into the hurdle of teaching SEL which can feel “insurmountable sometimes” yet that has allowed them to also grow personally as a “better person.” The self-reflection provided a critique of their practice but also the expectations in place to accomplish the goals.

Teacher 1A:

I think that the amount of knowledge that you have to have too is incredible, like to be effective, whatever the expectation is for teachers, like the cap is insurmountable sometimes. I cannot learn fast enough and to iterate. Like it's like science on crack because you're doing it and then you're just moving... But just the human aspect of teaching has made me a better person because having access to so many people, because I know I have to be better for my students to be better. Teaching has softened me.

Participants recognized that self-awareness of one's emotions and actions is part of the teaching experience. The participants shared their insight into their practice of SEL and made comments about what factors allow them to be effective.

Cultural Competency and SEL

Teacher and administrators identified that SEL cultural competencies were considered an important part of their teaching practice and school-wide culture. Teacher 6C shared the efforts they are making to be more culturally competent but also said they “do what they can” with the knowledge and experiences they have. There was a comment about the students who are simply “not seen” in the system and deciding what students to focus their efforts on in order those students to simply, “be noticed.”

Teacher 6C:

We did a lot of work around equity and thinking about how to support our African-American and Latino students. We did a lot of work there and just understanding their particular needs and challenges and how do we reach them. And I remember reading this article called, I think it was African-American boys, like, was something called a warm demander. I do what I can. The students who are not seen are the ones that I make the strongest effort, because the other one's going to be seen and noticed, and they're going to get what they need regardless of my efforts. But the kids who are not seen by our system, need to be seen.

Cultural competency in SEL moves beyond equity, but Administrator C noted it is an approach to empowering students, all students, including those of color, with the skills and knowledge to be as effective as their White counterparts.

Administrator C:

We did a whole school assembly on Martin Luther King Jr. Where students all shared their connection to Dr. King, in whatever way that they age-appropriate way that they connected to him. And I left it wide open and the whole assembly was students talking.

Additionally, teachers noted how developing self-awareness in themselves also has a cultural awareness component to it for not only themselves but for their students.

Teacher 1A:

We do a lot of social justice [work] and, that in order for us to be able to have those talks, I have to help them become self-aware.

Teacher 3A:

I also feel like my job location has increased my awareness. Like when I was in Las Vegas, it wasn't something that was at the front line of what we're doing. But like now that I'm in a much more urban setting it's a bigger topic.

Teachers 1A and 3A noted that teaching SEL in an urban school with Black and Brown students made them more aware of the importance of SEL.

With respect to Research Question 1, several themes emerged overwhelmingly from the study's participants: the importance of modeling social-emotional competencies, the role emotions play when implementing SEL, teacher self-awareness of SEL skills and a teachers' cultural competency related to SEL.

Second Research Question

The second research question asked was, "How, if at all, do teachers incorporate social and emotional learning into instruction and curricula?" Two major themes emerged from this question: the importance of STRs, and the need for time for SEL implementation. Data collected through the interviews and the teacher self-reflection tool identified the most common barrier to SEL implementation is the amount of time dedicated to SEL. It was noted that time dedicated for the purpose of building STRs can be beneficial but is lacking in the time allotted in the school day.

The Practice of SEL: Student-Teacher Relationships and Student-Student Relationships

Student-teacher relationships emerged as a common theme during the interview concerning the practice of SEL. Student-teacher relationships are described as healthy dyads of trust where both feel a level of mutual respect and trust, and kindness. Teachers and administrators noted the STRs with rich thick narrative detail throughout the interviews. During the interview, Teacher 3A emphasized what they think is the foundation of building a supportive classroom with strong STRs starts with getting to know their students individually. Teacher 3A also went on to mention that teaching SEL skills also helps build caring relationships.

Teacher 3A:

I think the first step is building relationships with every single one of your kids and knowing something about them individually. I think making it the norm to do breathing exercises or stretches like with all your students like when you're doing it with one, they're not like the only one. And I mean, honestly I think stretching and breathing is good for everybody, so it's just all-around a good idea... I always had really good relationships. Like one-on-one with my kids. Like I knew they would never do anything to hurt me, but then sometimes they are really mean

to each other. And I never figured it out early on how to facilitate this community where they all respect and care for each other.

Teacher 3A noted that building relationships with students is important, but they also stated that students building relationships with each other matters too. Teacher 3A commented that learning how to “facilitate this community where they all respect and care for each other” is something they “never figured out.”

Teacher 6C noted that their relationships with students is what they feel “most pride in” over the subject matters they have taught. Teacher 6C recognized that by establishing those STRs helped them be more encouraging and also was a priority over the academics.

Teacher 6C:

I love teaching and my strengths as a teacher are, I would not say that I’m the best science teacher or best math teacher or whatever. I always feel the most pride in being able to support students and, and helping them feel seen, known, and valued. And the more I can leverage my relationship with them to encourage them, to show them things about themselves that they wouldn’t necessarily see. I mean, especially in middle school, it’s really a hard time so the interpersonal relationship with my students is always where I feel good.

Teacher 6C talked in length about their experience teaching in a public school where test scores were the priority rather than their relationships with students. This is in to contrast Teacher 6C’s experience teaching in a charter school, where they now have had the opportunity to make STRs a priority.

Teacher 6C:

When I worked 10 years in title-one schools where the pressure was getting test scores up, that kind of you do that to the exclusion of, of anything deemed is, is extra. Um, and so it’s at my current school. I finally had the time, to know these are important things. And, you know, to have that pressure removed has been really freeing to invest more, um, in the social, emotional wellbeing of my students.

Teacher 3A shared the emotions in relationship to teaching academics, “I mean, it’s just so much more than just reading curriculum and delivering it. There’s so much with kids and even with my own emotions and so many layers of it that go into teaching where it’s not, it’s a lot harder than people think it is.”

The SEL reflection tool also asked about teachers' skills at relationship building and connecting with students. Teachers all rated themselves extremely high in their warmth and support provided to students during instructional practices. Specifically, teachers rated themselves as having demonstrated to all student that they appreciate them as individuals and also let their students know that it is okay to get answers wrong or think outside the box.

Teachers noted in both their interviews and during the self-reflection tool that STRs are important but depending on whether one worked at a public, private or charter school changed the priority to dedicate time to those relationships and SEL building skills.

Third Research Question

The third research question asked, "What forms of teachers' social and emotional learning training, development, and supports are perceived as being most helpful to teachers working in K-12 schools?" This question prompted four trends to emerge: The first two themes are related to the development of teacher SEL competencies in teacher training programs and at their respective school sites. Teachers were asked to share their experiences in their teacher training programs, what they observed in their student teaching experiences, and if they have had SEL training after they completed their teacher training program. The second two themes that emerged concern teacher stress related to SEL and teacher collaboration and peer support.

Preservice Teacher Training Program and Student Teaching Experiences

The themes were related to the perception of their teacher training program and student teaching experiences, as well as comments about the training that has taken place after they became a teacher. Teachers shared what their preservice teacher training experience provided them concerning SEL education in their program.

Teacher 8D:

When I had to do the TPA (Teacher Performance Assessment), it was nothing about social, emotional learning. It was about math. It was about language arts, it was about formative assessment, a summative assessment. There was nothing about social, emotional learning. So, if it had been, maybe I would have either paid more attention to that or like said, can we do

a little bit something, a little different? But because the credential program wasn't that geared toward it, I wasn't focused on it..

Teacher 6C:

The mentor teacher was different and she was not warm and friendly. I mean she wasn't warm and cuddly. And, I think she used rewards. She must've used rewards like card chart stickers, not a sticker chart, but the like red, you know, something there was that I used immediately when I went over to, fifth grade, on my own. Um, I'm sure she probably did a raffle and anything to help make it fun. She was definitely a rewards person.

Teacher 4B:

I student taught in High School. I don't recall my mentor teacher's classroom management strategies. It was traditional rows of desks and they just sort of put their noses to the grindstones and got to work. My other mentor in middle school, I do recall that he always had a lot of things that were engaging. He could play the piano well and he'd play the mission impossible theme while they were cleaning up. I guess he had a lot of joy factor in his class and, a lot of followthrough.

Teacher 2A:

I was just thrown in, but then in the summer before, I had to do one bout of student teaching, but because I was working full-time as a teacher already. There was a teacher shortage because of reduced class sizes. I had to do it in the summer at one of their year-round programs.

Multiple teachers noted that there has been limited training and support of SEL in the teaching practice. The training was limited to nonexistent in their teacher pre-service programs and was not observable in their student teacher placements.

Teacher Training After Becoming a Teacher

Teachers shared their experience with training, or lack thereof, in SEL once they became teachers at their respective school sites. Several teachers noted that they received some training in programs such as Responsive Classroom or Positive Discipline or learned about SEL in conferences or workshops if they sought it out on their own.

Teacher 2A:

I was on an emergency credential and then like an old teacher close to retirement called and said, you know, you really should close your door and move away from the windows. And I'm like, why? And she's like, those were gunshots, honey. Like I had no idea. I mean, literally clueless I'm like, Oh my God, I cannot believe this, who put me in charge of all these little kids.

Teacher 4B:

We do morning meetings and team-building activities, but I know that you know, there are a lot of activities within positive discipline that can be done to really focus students on a particular concept. And so, for me, it would be becoming more familiar with those activities, familiar with running them and facilitating them, and having the materials (Teacher 4B, personal communication, March 14, 2021).

Teacher 1A:

I think that the amount of knowledge that you have to have is incredible. To be effective, whatever the expectation is for teachers, like the cap is it's insurmountable sometimes. Get access to as many resources as you can to learn the skills. I don't even know, humanize the kids, see the kids first, see the whole child, you know, like take a step back and just, and then just learn as much as you can...when teachers talk about kids' behaviors, they just don't know what to do. Like for example, some of the kids that needed more emotional support just need that. Social, emotional support period.

Teacher 1A:

I wish there were more organizational structures that could be provided to schools because as, not as like a veteran teacher, like as a beginning teacher, for me, having scripts, having examples, like having those things help me practice. And when I would practice them perfectly, then it became more intuitive and I was able to feel successful and not think about it. So, I can understand maybe why, like older teachers don't really like, like scripted stuff or like, like that stuff. But especially since we, I was never taught this when I was in school. Like we never got to talk about, you know, self-management or like social awareness.

Teacher 6C went into detail sharing their experience with how curriculum and training was limited or not provided to them at all and they had to "figure things out" or rely on an outside person to come in to assist them.

Teacher 6C:

So, your kind of just left on your own to figure things out. And so, um, that's what I did when I came to my school. I, um, uh, I, you know, there was a curriculum and there were people who would come in once a week and do lessons with your kids. And, um, uh, so I've learned a little bit more from being at my school, um, and had permission to, you know, do lessons about it and have the time, to really invest in it. I think it was, you know, finally valued out in the open, um, as something to, you know, teaching kids, those soft skills that they need without the kind of threat of test scores.

Using the SEL self-reflection tool, in the section addressing SEL instructional practices, teachers rated themselves as having difficulty with providing their students strategies to analyze their work using rubrics or peer reviews, a self-reflection SEL practice. Additionally, teachers reported themselves as having difficulty creating opportunities for their students to monitor and reflect on their

social learning. It was not specifically indicated if this was an issue of not having enough time or a training challenge.

Teacher Stress

During the interviews teachers and administrators shared their experience with job stress and several participants noted their response to stress related to their jobs. The role of the administrator also came into play concerning teacher stress.

Teacher 2A:

IEP meetings make me miserable to the point that I have thrown up on my way to special ed meetings. I tell my husband, like on a daily basis, I don't want to do this anymore, but I'm at that weird age where I'm 12 years away from retirement, so I'm too close to quit and do something else, but too far to retire. Yeah. I, when I'm sitting with kids, like none of that matters, like it all, I can push it all away and I've never had an I'm, like, I don't even have upset parents, much less anyone that wants to Sue. Like I just, I'm honest, pretty much with them, like, this is what it can do. This is what it can't do. And when we do have lawsuits at our school, almost all the time at some crazy line in the sand that the made, like, I don't see how you cannot see that loving-kindness is what prohibits loss, what stops lawsuits, not dotting some tea or crossing some, I, you know, like, I'm super careful with my paperwork, of course.

Teacher 1A reflected on the high stress that impacted their experience as a new teacher, later adjusting expectations to cope with the stress. The value of having the ability to regulate one's emotions when they are triggered by stress.

Teacher 1A:

I remember my first year I was so overwhelmed. And I'm like, I don't know how I'm going to do this another year. You know? And honestly like, it's like, it's hard because my colleagues say, Oh my God, you're so amazing. Like, you're meant to be a teacher. You're right where you're supposed to be. But like, I literally cried under my desk the first two years. Cause I was really under my desk, like this is my safe place. Now, like how I cope with that, like, I'd just basically adjust. I had to like adjust my expectations a lot.

Teacher 5B:

I feel like a lot of miscommunications happen because people don't know how to communicate their feelings or they don't know how to recognize their own feelings, you know? And so, then they get uncomfortable and think that it's not okay to feel a certain way about certain things. So just like seeing it in action with kids and like my own relationships with people, it just solidified how important it is and how, yeah, you can't, I don't think that you can have a good working classroom if you don't have any social, emotional learning going on.

Administrator D:

We all lose our cool, we all lose our ability to make sense, but it's recognizing like I can stick to that majority of the time and remember like the other person on the other end who's flaring up right now has some need, that's not being fulfilled. So, they're expressing it either through anger, frustration, tears, you know, sadness, or just confusion... There are still times where you lose that control, that sense of self-regulation. But for me, it's been a constant exposure and I've of course looked into it much deeper than a lot of people.

Teacher 5B:

I got into a little power struggle with a student. I was thinking about it after, and what I should have done is that first day or two, he was in the classroom. I re-introduced the chill zone and the peace chair and I reintroduced it to everyone. And I realized I had not set that up with him, but the rest of the class knew it.

Participants shared a variety of examples of what may lead to their job stress, which included miscommunication, lack of self-regulation of their emotions, power struggles with students and feeling overwhelmed.

Administrator C:

A lot of times it's not acceptable for teachers to express emotion in school...It just depends on who the teacher, how they cope with stress. If teachers can't care for themselves, that they can't put on their own oxygen masks, then they can't care for their kids.

The value of being able to express emotions and cope with stress was shared by multiple participants.

Curriculum and Teacher Collaboration

Participants shared what types of curricula, if at all, they used for SEL and how they collaborated with other colleagues in SEL implementation.

Teacher 2A:

I just see what teachers do, you know, and I don't always agree with my colleagues and how they react to kids. And, um, it's upsetting, it's frustrating.

Teacher 1A:

With the emotions of it is mostly just depending on my, all my colleagues, like my, my grade level team, we talk about stuff a lot. And then also just like trying to figure out what is manageable. Like what, what do we have to do and how can we do less.

Not being provided SEL curriculum was identified as a challenge to teaching SEL. Leaning on colleagues to assist in developing SEL curriculum was expressed by four of the teachers.

Teacher 8D:

So, I think, my first taste of SEL was when I was long-term substitute teaching in transitional kindergarten. That's when I saw it. Cause they had a huge kit, had puppets. It had lessons like weekly lessons day, one day, two-day, three-day, four day five. And you'd literally go through and it was, I mean it was a kit and it had it all laid out.

Teachers shared that they had little or no exposure or access to SEL curriculum. The data shows that all participants acknowledge the difficulty of implementing SEL without concrete and explicit instruction, training, and support.

Chapter Summary

The participants interviewed shared rich, thick narrative responses related to the research questions. Within the data analysis of the interviews, several trends emerged from Research Question 1 related the importance of modeling self-regulation, the role of emotions and teachers' self-awareness when implementing SEL. The participants, both administrators and teachers, consistently shared both the value of modeling SEL as well as the challenge of exhibiting and modeling social and emotional competencies and behavior for students.

There were several trends related to Research Question 2, including the importance of STRs and the need for time for SEL implementation. There were several trends related to Research Question 3: the development of teacher SEL competencies in teacher training programs, teaching SEL strategies as part of their teaching, teacher stress and teacher burnout and SEL, SEL curriculum and teacher collaboration, and cultural competency and SEL skills.

Throughout the interviews, it was apparent from their descriptions that teachers cared deeply about the relationships they have with their students and also wanted to share their own challenges with teaching students social-emotional skills. All the participants verbally thanked me for having given them the opportunity to share their insight and experiences. Several teacher participants noted how helpful it was for them to use the social-emotional self-reflection tool to consider more deeply their SEL practices and skills.

Administrators were asked similar questions regarding training and supports for teachers and they both noted that learning SEL typically happens independent of teaching training programs or site-based professional development. Two of the administrators have brought trainings to their school sites and two of the administrators also identified specific SEL curriculum that their teachers were trained in. Two administrators also noted that they have received extensive training in SEL practices and use those experiences to train and support their teachers. Teachers noted that time is a big factor in implementing SEL. Setting aside time for training and support was presented as a challenge in both the teacher and administrative interviews.

Information from the data analysis in Chapter 4 was used to develop these findings. Chapter 5 will address the conclusions and implications on practice, theory and policy as well as future research into SEL.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand teachers' perceptions regarding their social-emotional competencies, how they perceive the development of those social-emotional competencies, and how those competencies affect SEL teaching practice. Chapter 4 identified the key findings, including teachers' perceptions of SEL modeling, SEL preservice and in-service teacher training, and SEL implementation.

Chapter 5 provides my interpretation and constructed meaning from the results. I begin Chapter 5 by summarizing the overall landscape of the findings on teachers' perceptions of SEL concerning the research questions. The chapter synthesizes the key findings and details teachers' and administrators' perceptions of SEL training throughout their career, and their perceptions of stress in relationship to SEL. Next, implications for policy, practice, and theory are discussed. Finally, I conclude the chapter with recommendations for future research, and a summary of the study. All of the discussions within Chapter 5 are extrapolated from the teacher and administrative interviews, except when specifically noted that the teacher social-emotional self-reflection tool was used.

Interpretations and Conclusions

Overall, the findings suggested that teachers' perceptions of the SEL skills needed for SEL implementation are consistent with prior research findings that noted educators may not be fully equipped with well-developed social-emotional competencies (Bracket & Katulak, 2007; Domitrovich et al., 2017). Based on the findings, the participants did not perceive a clear definition of SEL, which may contribute to a lack of clarity of what the expectations are with relationship to SEL in practice. Teachers in the study reported that SEL skills had not been not sufficiently modeled for them at different junctures in their development as educators. Specifically, teachers and administrators suggested that their pre-service teacher training programs did not embed SEL theory and practice, nor was it modeled sufficiently into their training, which was also noted in prior research (Donahue et al., 2019; Stites et al., 2018). Teachers collectively suggested that time to implement SEL in the form

of support from their administration is critical to their success. When adopting SEL, offering SEL training and creating time for student-teacher and collegial relationship building may also be beneficial. The findings consistently noted that teachers perceive that SEL, both building SEL skills for themselves and teaching SEL to their students, could have a positive impact on student learning (Domitrovich et al., 2015; Greenberg et al., 2003; Lendrum & Humphrey, 2012).

SEL Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Modeling

Teacher Preservice Preparation

The findings are aligned with previous research that found that teachers' knowledge of SEL was limited by what they were taught in their preservice education program (Alan et al. 2019). All the teachers in the study shared that they did not feel prepared to teach social-emotional learning after their teacher preparation programs. These findings suggested that participants believed training about SEL was limited in scope or nonexistent during preservice training programs. When asked whether they learned about SEL in their preservice programs or to what extent they learned about SEL, all but one of the participants replied "none" or "I did not learn about SEL." One teacher reflected on their preservice program and noted that "we didn't cover SEL...I learned it on my own." A different participant stated that they learned about SEL in their teacher training program but said they never saw any applications of it as a teacher to date; the teacher had heard about SEL being done in other schools but had not yet seen it being implemented at their school site.

The findings indicate that teachers perceived that their preparation programs did not embed SEL theory and practice sufficiently enough to allow them to confidently institute SEL practices once becoming a teacher. In this study, the teachers' perceptions are aligned with prior research indicating that teachers have a gap in SEL knowledge (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Domitrovich et al., 2017). One of the experiences new teachers have is working with a mentor teacher who models the teaching practices for the novice teacher. A notable finding in this study related to modeling was that all but one of the teachers were not clear on what SEL modeling looked like for their students. Teachers suggested that SEL had not been modeled or was limited in modeling for them during their preservice

experience. One teacher recalled that their mentor teacher stated that they would rather use rewards or punishments to discipline students, which they deemed effective, as opposed to using an SEL approach. Several teachers mentioned that their mentor teachers would shame students, putting them down by saying they were not capable of doing a task or comparing them negatively to another student.

The findings suggested that, although teachers do perceive modeling SEL to be important, having the skills to model social-emotional competencies, such as self-regulation, may be challenging if they have not seen it in practice during their preservice experience or developed it over the course of their lifetime. The lack of SEL modeling may be a factor in why effectively teaching SEL is so challenging (Roberts et al., 2014). The findings suggest that teachers may require SEL modeling and training during their preservice experience to prepare them for teaching and implementing SEL.

Teacher Professional Development Experiences

SEL professional development is designed to promote a teacher's competence in SEL classroom instruction. There are several notable programs that have been shown to be highly effective in developing a teacher's social-emotional competencies (Jennings et al., 2017; Talvio et al., 2013). Teachers in this study indicated a need and a desire to be offered SEL professional development training throughout their careers. Teachers said that any training and support is helpful because in the current state there is limited to no training and support, and they are often left to figure SEL out on their own. Several teachers stated that they are seeking out SEL workshops themselves at conferences or researching about it online because they recognize the need and the value of SEL, but they don't feel they can implement it because either their administration doesn't support them in implementing SEL, or it's not aligned with the current school curriculum. While teachers and administrators noted that they may need school district or board approval to adopt SEL curriculum or practices, they are making attempts in varying degrees to adopt SEL practices and learn SEL independent of the school district or board support.

The findings demonstrated SEL curriculum programs such as Second Step, Responsive Classroom, and Positive Discipline were introduced to teachers at their school sites, not in their preservice teacher training programs. Participants in the charter and private schools reported that SEL curriculum is being implemented on a case-by-case basis, ranging from partial to full adoption, and is mostly dependent upon the individual teachers' interest in SEL and also the level of administrative support. All of the teachers who participated in this study who had received SEL training at their school site or had implemented an SEL curriculum did so after being trained at their charter or private schools.

Teachers identified the limited scope of SEL training as another challenge. The seven teachers who received SEL curriculum training at their school site noted that the duration of the training was between 2 and 5 days. None of the teachers in this study who attended trainings were provided with ongoing SEL training outside of their initial training period and the support beyond that initial training was limited. As a result of limited training, several teachers shared that they sought out additional SEL information and training on their own. Based on the findings, there seems to be a tremendous gap in what teachers are expected to know concerning SEL and what is being embedded in their training experiences.

After completing SEL professional development, several teachers in this study reported that they did not receive clear expectations regarding the frequency of SEL instruction and the depth of implementation. Several of the public school educators noted that they had created their own SEL curriculum based on what they could find from the internet or if a colleague shared information that they had learned. Additionally, none of the public school teachers had received any formal training with the SEL curriculum. A few teachers noted that they received very limited training on mindfulness, which they sought out on their own time to help themselves cope with the stress of the job. The findings suggested that the difference in training and curriculum adoption between public, private, and charter schools may be due to multiple factors, including district goals, learning objectives, and the personal values or interest administrators have in SEL.

Research has shown that educational environments, school culture, and professional development at the school site either support or constrict teachers' ability to develop their social-emotional competencies and implement SEL (Collie et al., 2015). Furthermore, teachers' choosing to develop social-emotional competencies has been shown to be beneficial to students (Durlak, 2011); however, when and how they develop those skills remains to be at the discretion of the administrator or teacher. The findings are aligned with prior research that indicates that there are challenges with teacher SEL training (Palomera et al., 2017). The findings of this study suggest that SEL training is either nonexistent or sporadic, and when it does occur teacher expectations regarding implementation are vague and successful assessment of implementation is never addressed.

The findings indicate that teachers are aware of the vast range of teacher SEL training available, but SEL training is not offered universally to all staff. Rather, a few teachers noted that SEL training is often randomly offered to staff and without specific requirements for completion or implementation. The findings made it clear that although teachers find great value in SEL, they have not been trained in it and feel their school sites are doing little to support SEL implementation.

The findings of the study suggest that the participating teachers recognize gaps in social-emotional competencies, such as emotional skills, but they have not identified a clear pathway to address their specific needs to build these skills. The teachers noted that being able to effectively identify and express their emotion is an important part of their teaching practice, yet trainings in emotional skills were perceived as a gap. Consequently, the findings suggest that years of teaching experience may not be indicative of SEL skill development.

Participants expressed how discouraged they feel when they know they should be practicing and implementing SEL. Eight of the 10 teachers indicated during their interviews and in their self-assessment surveys that they are not feeling successful in their overall knowledge of SEL and are limited in their SEL implementation practices. The findings are consistent with research that has

shown that explicitly teaching SEL skills helps children become more successful academically, socially, and emotionally at school and later in life (Brackett & Katulak, 2007; Jazaieri, 2018), yet practical applications of those theories have been more problematic for teachers (Durlak, 2016; Yeung et al., 2016).

Teacher Stress Reduced with Explicit SEL Training

Teacher collaboration and teacher support were noted in the findings as a means to mitigate teacher stress. Multiple teachers stated their perceptions regarding the benefit of being able to express their emotions to their colleagues when they are experiencing stress. The findings suggest that when teachers feel lonely and isolated the administration can play an important role in encouraging peer connections and decreasing teacher stress. Teachers relayed that when administrators allow time for teacher collaboration they feel less stressed. The findings indicated that teachers are relying on each other for emotional support and as sounding boards to discuss challenging students. Teachers also shared that they prefer to collaborate with other teachers in order to share SEL classroom resources. Embedding SEL resources through peer support and collaboration may be a vehicle for reducing stress.

The findings suggested that in order to obtain SEL skills and practical knowledge to implement SEL, teachers need to develop social-emotional competencies such as self-regulation and emotional awareness. Teachers expressed the need for developing greater coping skills to manage their stress. Stress was exhibited by teachers during their interviews. Although the interview questions were framed to highlight the participant's strengths, (i.e., "What strategies are you currently using to manage your classroom?"), most of the participants responded to this question with comments about their stress. In the findings, it was noted that multiple teachers shared their perceived personal or professional deficits related to their social-emotional competencies specifically in coping with stress.

Multiple teachers and administrators shared that when feeling angry, concerned, anxious in the classroom, they did not know how to manage their stress. They were unclear how to address their

emotions so that they could continue to be productive and successful educators. Several teachers expressed that when they become annoyed or irritated with their students, they reacted negatively by raising their voice or sending students out of the classroom. A few teachers also said that they felt embarrassed about sharing their lack of emotional regulation skills and that they recognized that they were not always reacting in a way that they were proud of. The findings indicate that teachers are aware of their SEL deficits but have not yet developed the skills to address those deficits.

Teachers perceived that they lack effective communication skills and emotional awareness to navigate difficult scenarios at work. Participants shared how their own emotions, such as fear, anger, shame, and guilt, play an important role in their teaching experience, both for themselves and their students, but that they feel overwhelmed by those emotions, causing them stress. Multiple teachers shared their perceptions of their limited skill set related to identifying emotions and effectively expressing those emotions healthily and helpfully with their students. The findings indicated that the problem teachers identified for themselves is that expressing their emotional language is a skill that they believe has not been fully cultivated through either training in their teacher training programs or provided at their school site. The stress placed on teachers to address the vast array of academic, social, and emotional needs of students in their classrooms may be a key factor in higher teacher burnout (Oberle et al., 2016). The findings of the study are consistent with prior research on teacher stress and the impact of stress on teacher burnout.

Teachers reported that they see observable stress in other teachers who are “screaming at kids” and “shaming them.” Teacher stress was said to be tied to ineffectively using SEL or simply not knowing what to do. One teacher and one administrator noted that were grappling with how to support their students and resorted to using SEL strategies taught to them by their therapists, such as calming themselves with a hand tapping and positive affirmation technique. When teachers did not know what to do with a student who is exhibiting behavioral challenges or looked depressed, they would often refer them to a school counselor. A teacher noted that if they had strategies to use in

class to help students they would like to use them, but they stated that relying the counselor is the only option since those students often absorb significant classroom attention.

The findings showed that teachers are independently making efforts to obtain coping skills to manage stress. Despite the efforts, multiple teachers shared their challenges with coping with their stress. This study is consistent with similar studies that explored the relationship between teachers' ability to cope with stress and how much control they feel they have to effect change in their environment (Baloglu, 2008), as well as the impact stress has on emotional exhaustion and teacher burnout (Shen et al., 2015). These findings indicate that the perception of teachers' lived experience and belief about how they are coping with their stress affects their emotional well-being and professional job longevity.

Time is Necessary to Build Student-Teacher Relationships and Implement SEL

The findings demonstrated that teachers perceive that SEL may not be a significant part of their school day experience because there is no time built into the day for SEL instruction. Time pressure was shown in prior studies to be a key factor that leads to teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The findings of this study indicate that time constraints regarding SEL also lead to teacher stress and possible teacher burnout. The findings also suggest that teachers are not observing that SEL is a priority for the administration so the time dedicated to SEL is being limited by administrators. The teachers shared that every moment of the day is accounted for with general academics and other core subjects that are seen on the report cards, and they perceived that if the subjects are aligned with standardized testing then those subjects are the focus of the learning. One teacher shared that SEL may not be a priority since it is not assessed in report cards. The findings suggest that if SEL is not assessed on the report card teachers may not perceive SEL as a priority. If SEL is not perceived as a priority that time is not built into the day to teach SEL.

The findings suggest that the lack of time given in the day for teachers to build STRs is problematic for SEL implementation. The findings in this study suggest that one of the major challenges for teachers is the lack of time dedicated in their day for embedding SEL into the

curriculum. The public and charter teacher participants expressed that there was a lack of time to implement SEL and stated that the pressure to focus on academics and ensure students do well on tests is a challenge.

However, the charter school teachers expressed that they feel SEL is a priority, given the support to implement SEL from their administrators and that time is built into the school day to implement SEL. This study noted that there is a discrepancy in the time dedicated to teacher training and support of SEL in the private and charter school participants versus the public-school participants.

Implications

The study results shed light on social-emotional competencies teachers perceive to be important, what preservice experiences and professional development teachers believe are required to develop their SEL competencies, and the challenges related to SEL implementation. The next section discusses the implications for policy, practice, and theory, as well as implications for future research. Collectively, these implications broaden our understanding of the gap in SEL adoption and implementation leading to greater social-emotional competencies for teachers.

Implications for Policy

Teacher and administrative services training programs need to include a significant degree of practical SEL theory, applications, and explicit practices, as well as promote adult social-emotional competency development. The findings indicate that there is little or no SEL instruction occurring for either newly trained teachers or teachers who have been in the profession for more than 25 years. Neither administrators nor teachers recall learning about SEL curriculum and instruction during their training. If policy initiatives move SEL forward, there needs to be mechanisms in place to ensure that those very policy initiatives are being executed.

Due to the educational pivot towards supporting children's social and emotional needs, policy reform has advocated for explicitly teaching social-emotional skills and developing cultural proficiency in teachers (Aspen Institute, 2018). Research indicates that SEL promotes greater academic

achievement, increases student well-being, and has protective factors against anxiety, depression, and other mental health-related conditions (Durlak, 2015; Schonert, 2017; Wentzel, 1993). The problem is that teachers lack the social-emotional competencies needed to implement SEL (Brackett & Katulak, 2007). Teachers and administrators who acquire the knowledge of the history and development of SEL policy may better understand the variations in SEL terminology. Having a clear definition of SEL may allow educators to have a more explicit understanding of SEL in theory and practice. Current initiatives being employed such as RTI or MTSS are aligned with SEL, but there seems to be a disconnect between PBIS practices and how those are aligned with SEL.

Implications for Practice

Administrators Role in Teachers' SEL Adoption and Implementation

To universally adopt and implement SEL, administrators can assist in priming teachers with social-emotional skills and pedagogy, necessary social-emotional competencies, to implement SEL. There is a wealth of resources available (CASEL, 2016) to assist administrators in the process of building and implementing SEL into their teachers' practice. The findings from this research suggest that teachers have a strong desire to adopt an SEL approach, are capable of exhibiting compassion, and have a desire to build strong STRs. However, teachers may simply be falling short from being skilled at SEL due to the lack of training, time given in their day to implement SEL, and the development of SEL skills and knowledge to model SEL to their students.

These findings support that there is a critical need and prevailing desire on the part of teachers to support their efforts, and administrators can leverage that preexisting buy-in to provide them with SEL competencies. Despite the overwhelming evidence that has revealed how achievement gaps can be closed with the use of social-emotional approaches in the classroom (Becker & Suniya, 2002), there seems to be a disproportionate lack of explicit plan towards developing teachers' social and emotional competencies. The findings of this study collectively revealed that teachers and administrators have a wide range of definitions of SEL, which may prove problematic when determining SEL goals and assessing SEL practices.

Overall, teachers expressed that their role in adopting and implementing SEL practices was limited, and they perceived that SEL is primarily left in the hands of their administrators. Furthermore, teachers perceived that developing their social-emotional competencies faced multiple hurdles including feeling required to learn SEL independently of administrator support, lack of modeling and teaching SEL to their students without significant training, and teaching core academic content standards without having the time to embed SEL into their daily practice.

Teachers who are prepared to begin their careers in education would benefit from building their capacity to implement SEL. If teachers are not prepared in their teacher training program with the foundational knowledge or experience of modeling, then the responsibility will lie with administrators in their schools to provide teachers with the SEL training. Consequently, if teachers have not yet developed their social-emotional capacity, lack sufficient training in their teacher preparation program, or are not provided support to implement SEL in their school environment, then there is a high likelihood that students will not be provided with a significant opportunity to grow their own SEL skills.

Teachers can embed SEL which in turn can support each child's academic, social, emotional being so that they can be empowered to have a productive life, feel challenged, respected, safe, and inspired, and do so in a manner that provides long-term effects as a result of the child's educational experience. Teachers who participate in SEL training may be geared more towards fostering culturally responsive practices, showing more positive interactions with culturally diverse students, cultivating more supportive classroom climates, and developing more student-centered practices (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Since research shows the benefits of SEL, greater efforts need to be directed at ensuring that teachers are provided with the training and support to model and implement SEL practices. Teachers indicated in the findings that they know their mission transcends their students' cognitive and academic development; however, they may not be skilled in modeling the social-emotional skills or implementing SEL practices they are trying to teach their students. Teachers need

to gain the confidence to implement SEL, yet they currently lack the explicit instructional methods to teach their students SEL with fidelity, which entails both SEL modeling and SEL practices.

Across the findings, the idea of SEL needing time indicated that SEL is perceived to be primarily a subject to teach, such as math, language arts, social studies, and science, rather than a pedagogical approach that one primarily adopts as a teaching method. SEL has a component of having curricular practices but SEL is also an approach to teaching and learning that is based on interpersonal relationship building, emotional skills, affective responses to student behavior, self-regulation, and facilitation of intentional strategies to create belonging and community connections. Therefore, time in and of itself may be part of the perceived issue related to SEL in the curriculum, but the need for time may be unrelated to overall teacher practices. Building nurturing STRs and SEL training can promote greater academic, social, and emotional success, and putting SEL into practice is inevitably an integral facet to student and teacher success and well-being. The findings from this study shed light on a deeper understanding of the perspectives of teachers' social-emotional competencies, the development of social-emotional competencies, and the practice and implementation of SEL.

SEL Self-Reflection Tool

The SEL self-reflection tool highlights a potential disconnect between teachers' understanding and their practice of SEL. The findings suggested a discrepancy between the teacher interviews and their self-reflection reporting of social-emotional competencies. Studies have revealed that the self-assessment tools used to study STRs need to be more refined to gather valid data that shows more specific correlations between student and teacher's behaviors and how those behaviors impact STR (Phillipo et al., 2017). On surveys, teachers may not know how to express the struggles they are facing, and the survey tool may not be nuanced enough to capture their emotions during challenging interactions.

During the interviews, teachers shared in more detail their concerns regarding challenges with modeling SEL. The ratings indicated that they are self-reporting high levels of practices of SEL, yet

this was not expressed consistently during their interviews and rather represented a contradictory finding. When teachers self-reported their SEL competencies they reported themselves as having extremely high self-awareness, self-management/self-regulation, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills. However, there were inconsistencies in the interview statements and the self-reflection ratings. For example, teachers during the interview stated that they were having challenges with self-regulation and did not identify strategies to use during stress.

Yet, the self-rating scores showed that teachers agree or strongly agree that they effectively use strategies such as breathing techniques and mindfulness when they have a strong emotional reaction in the classroom such as showing stress or anger when implementing social-emotional practices. However, in another question on the self-rating on SEL practices, teachers reported that during classroom discussion they are not implementing the practice of helping students identify how to listen and make connections.

The SEL self-reflection tool may be a limitation to the study as it was insufficient to allow a full picture of teacher's SEL competencies compared with the interviews. The tool is possibly a better vehicle for teacher reflection and addressing areas for improvement but may not be a benefit to assess or evaluate teacher skills.

Implications for Theory

Adult social-emotional competencies have a direct relationship to developing cultural competency in meeting the needs of historically marginalized students. Maslow's humanistic and motivational learning theory, Bandura's social cognitive theory, and Seligman's PERMA theory provide a framework for understanding why people strive for belonging and to feel a connection, require emotional and physical safety, and crave respect (Bandura, 1977; Maslow, 1943; Seligman's 2011). The theories collectively address the "why" of human motivation and the need for connection, but they do not explicitly address how to get there. The explicit pathway of how to move towards belonging and building mutually respectful connections may be found in the process of learning social-emotional skills and developing social-emotional competencies. SEL provides practical

applications to be more self-aware, develop self-regulation tools, become responsible decision-makers, and nurture healthy relationships with others (CASEL 2015). SEL in turn provides opportunities to move towards creating fair, just, inclusive, and equitable schooling systems.

SEL practices should be at the forefront of fair, just, equitable, and inclusive efforts. SEL creates a universal language of mutual respect, focuses on equality, strives towards emotional wellness, and encourages democratic processes. Outside of a child's home, educators are the very drivers of SEL and can be leaders in the process of modeling and implementing an SEL approach. Families and teachers are partners in a child's education. Black and brown children, as well as students with mental health challenges or special needs, all benefit from and require teachers with SEL skill sets to reinforce and support building socially, emotionally, and academically thriving students. Ultimately, teachers who can support all of their students will have greater success in fostering coping skills and self-regulation (Reilly, 2015).

Implications for Future Research

Teacher training and administrative services programs need to do a deep dive into the quality of their programming and the methods they employ in teaching SEL. Ultimately, teachers are the key to effectively implementing social-emotional approaches and curricula (Elias, 2009), but how they develop those skills was not systematically identified in this study. Further research may help better understand how individual teacher programs are embedding SEL in their institutional practices and developing those teacher skills. Developing and teaching social-emotional skills does not include addressing the multitudes of challenging problems teachers are faced with that compound teaching and learning, such as managing teacher stress and modeling SEL skills. These challenges include students with special education needs, students dealing with systemic poverty and inequity, foster and homeless youth, and students who have had significant, traumatic life experiences, who were not addressed in this study. SEL is important as a means of harnessing the power of social-emotional skills with which we can help promote a greater sense of personal well-being, deeper connection with others, greater academic success, and more productive workplace performance.

The long-term vision of building social-emotional competencies is to develop these skills so that students and teachers can achieve their academic or career goals while building mutually respectful relationships and striving towards their personal development. Getting greater insight into the process of a teacher's developing one's social-emotional competencies may benefit school leaders in knowing what teachers are receiving in their preparation programs and what gaps may exist as they enter into the teaching profession. This may aid in in-service and professional development options and supervisory support.

Recommendations

In light of what I have learned from the literature review and my study's findings, there are four main recommendations I would make for policy, practice, and future research. The recommendations address our current institutional mechanisms that support or impede the equal development of all children to become fully functional and thriving adults in our society. The recommendations also reflect on how we train and educate administrators and teachers in their preservice training, the value we place on an educators SEL development as an ongoing process during in-service professional development, the role administrators play in SEL, and how we view the role of an educators' stress management to model and support student's academic, cognitive, cultural, social and emotional development.

Embed SEL Practices and Modeling for Teacher Candidates

A major component of preservice teachers' preparation is to pair teachers with a cooperating teacher expected to model best practices. However, the quality of these pairings and the support for preservice teachers have often not effectively supplied new teachers with the modeling or support they need to be effective once they enter their classrooms (Roberts et al., 2014). The findings of this study suggested that teachers do not have mentors during their student-teacher placement to model SEL. To develop SEL skills, effective modeling may address the goal of building capacity in teachers and being able to use those tools to effectively implement SEL in their classrooms. Research has shown that credentialed teacher mentors are expected to model best practices in a classroom setting;

however, the quality of these models can vary (Raicevic et al., 2017), further compounding the problem of limited educational practical knowledge, followed by limited modeling of SEL practices.

The research regarding SEL in preservice programs reveals that it is challenging to identify specific, explicit curricular or programmatic practices being employed. The findings concerning the lack of preparation in preservice programs are consistent with the research. Additionally, the findings showed that teachers are unlikely to have a model of effective SEL practices in their student teaching experience. Teacher training programs should identify mentor teachers to model SEL for new teachers and administrators in SEL theory, curriculum, and practices. Efforts to ensure teacher and administrative preservice programs sufficiently train educators in SEL pedagogy, curriculum, and practices will lead to greater student social, emotional, and academic success (Durlak et al., 2011).

Teachers and administrators in this study reported that SEL was limited or nonexistent in their training programs. Recognizing the gap in their SEL training can help to direct efforts in effectively embedding training and modeling to provide teachers with these SEL skills. Substantial efforts to embed SEL into teacher and administrative training programs should be thoughtfully explored. The social-emotional self-reflection tool (Yoder, 2014) can serve as an example of a tool that can be used to establish criteria for SEL modeling. Mentor programs can consider both the curriculum content and instructional methods employing SEL practices that reflect social-emotional learning.

Teaching programs should provide evidence that SEL is significantly embedded in the theoretical foundations and practical experience of teachers. Educators should be introduced to SEL theory and practice and have the opportunity to explore a curriculum that they can adopt. Programs may reflect on the degree to which they embed explicit SEL practices for classroom instruction, and then develop a concrete plan to amend or adjust current course work and student teaching experiences to ensure SEL is integrated. Additionally, programs should intentionally develop strong teacher mentors for new student teachers so that they can observe the modeling of SEL in their program. Preservice teachers can be introduced to SEL curriculum and practices at the start of their program and later observe mentor teachers implementing SEL. Finally, teacher training programs

should include adult social-emotional competency development to help teachers learn how to cope with stress, identify emotions and express themselves respectfully.

A teacher's preservice teacher education is the starting point in which the foundations of teaching and learning best practices are introduced. The assumption should be that SEL had been a core component to an educators' foundation and then those skills and practices are further developed and expanded upon throughout their career. Although there is a plethora of recent research to support actions to address students' social and emotional learning, there is little research addressing the degree to which teachers are receiving the training or professional development necessary to acquire the knowledge base to ensure the successful implementation of SEL.

Ideally, teachers are prepared as preservice educators to begin their careers with their own set of SEL competencies and mindfulness practices. Research shows that teachers are better prepared when they can develop relationship-based skills to connect with culturally diverse students (Lewis Chiu et al., 2017; Kabat-Zinn, 2003) but if they weren't prepared in their programs, then we can embed professional development opportunities to teach them anytime. The findings indicate that social-emotional learning is not embedded in training programs. Training could work towards priming teachers with foundational knowledge, a framework of understanding SEL. There is no requirement for teachers to take a social-emotional competencies assessment before entering into a teacher training program, during a teacher training program, or their teaching placement. So, the fact that we are asking teachers to have these skills without teaching them to them or knowing if they have them is an area considered in this study.

Dedicate Time and Resources to SEL Professional Development

Administrators are uniquely positioned to provide teachers with SEL skills and support the development of social-emotional competencies. Administrators can prioritize SEL by explicitly carving out time for teachers to execute SEL practices, such as classroom meetings with skill building minilessons (CASEL, 2016). SEL professional development to implement SEL curricula and practices can be paired with ongoing SEL strategies and tools modeled or taught to teachers during weekly and

monthly staff meetings. Administrators can model SEL during day-to-day interactions that reflect mutually respectful communication and interact with teachers, students, and parents modeling social-emotional competencies, which in turn reinforce and teach SEL.

In addition to explicitly and systematically dedicating time for SEL instruction, SEL can be woven into the teaching practices and embedded in the process of teaching that does not require time. Administrators can provide opportunities to guide teachers so that they can clearly define SEL, develop SEL skills and a curriculum approach, and learn practical strategies to effectively support all students. The guidance from administrators can come in the form of providing professional development opportunities on specific SEL curricula, carving out time for SEL implementation in the daily schedule, and demonstrating strategies to reduce teacher stress. The findings suggested that if teachers do not develop adequate social-emotional competencies themselves, then the implementation of SEL may be fraught with challenges and pitfalls despite the teacher's efforts. Administrators should acknowledge the impact stress has on teachers and prioritize SEL professional development and provide ongoing opportunities for training and support. Teachers who lack sufficient training in their teacher preparation program or begin teaching lacking a significant opportunity to grow their social-emotional learning skills (Altan et al., 2019) can build those skills through intentional training driven by their school administrator.

The findings suggest that teachers rely on their school administrators to support them in these efforts and benefit from having administrators who value SEL in their practice by not only encouraging them to implement SEL but provide training, time, and assistance in implementation. Throughout an educators' career, teachers would benefit from receiving training and support in learning how to identify, express, and cope with emotions, and utilize mindfulness-based practices (Hernández & Urrea-Solano, 2017; Lopes et al., 2012). A significant amount of time dedicated to SEL can support SEL implementation throughout an educator's career and SEL training should be considered an ongoing learning process. SEL can also be embedded in multiple aspects of a teachers' professional development to build expertise in SEL. SEL can be part of activities presented during staff meetings

and shared with staff webinars. Essentially, SEL should be deemed as a foundational part of the school culture and not an add-on curriculum.

Administrators play an important role in the adoption and implementation of SEL and should be the instructional leaders and experts in SEL at their school sites. Administrators should feel confident that they are capable of modeling, nurturing, and supporting SEL at their school site. Although educational leaders have questioned whether it is possible to fully address the needs of all learners (Ladson-Billings, 2011), they need to take the time to understand that all learners' needs can be met social and emotionally as a foundation for all academic learning. Despite the challenges that leaders face, social-emotional learning may be one of the key critical pathways to address the needs of our most underserved populations. SEL for Black and Brown students may very well make a critical difference for those who have not had the opportunity to build upon their competencies, experiences, and knowledge.

The findings suggest that administrators often rely on training and are not necessarily subject matter experts. Administrators could serve as instructional coaches and model SEL during staff meetings and provide SEL support during one-on-one interactions with their teaching staff. Administrators should not rely on teachers seeking out their SEL development and training. Nor should administrators leave it up to the teachers whether they learn SEL on their own but should embed explicit training to support them. Administrators also need to ensure that school discipline models are consistent with SEL approaches and limit authoritarian or punitive methods. Administrators need to ensure that SEL discipline matches a respectful process, such as Restorative Justice models.

One teacher, new to the teaching profession, shared that they experienced emotions such as sadness or fear during their first years of teaching, while another teacher stated they also experienced sadness and fear even after teaching for 27 years. These teachers did not go into specific detail about what was causing their sadness and fear but intimated that it was directly connected to not being able to make an impactful difference in their students' lives due to the lack of

emphasis on SEL. The teachers' sense of not being able to address student's SEL did not seem to be connected to their years of teaching experience but rather was more related to whether they had learned SEL skills at some juncture in their teaching professional experience.

While the role of district or school board adoption of SEL could be a question of note for future research, this present study suggests the potential for a positive impact that administrators can have on a school's SEL adoption and implementation is worthy of future research. For example, administrators can support teacher collaboration with other teachers, which the findings noted is critical for SEL implementation. The findings also suggested that the administration feels responsible for helping support teachers and that teachers would most honor that support by observing a coordinated approach at their school site.

Ultimately, school administration may play a critical role in whether SEL is adopted or how much SEL professional development occurs or to what degree SEL is implemented. School administrators set the tone of the school culture by adopting or not adopting SEL. Administrators spearhead efforts to adopt the SEL curriculum, build teacher mentor teams, oversee effective implementation, and day-to-day support teachers who exhibit job stress. In essence, the school administration has the power to decide whether SEL is important to their school site and determine what avenues should be taken to put SEL into practice.

Adopt an SEL Approach, Select SEL Curriculum and a Plan for Effective Implementation

SEL is an approach to teaching that builds in the development of social-emotional competencies not merely as a subject to teach but as a foundational mechanism to address the needs of the whole child. SEL is also curriculum that has been created to meet the learning objectives of nurturing the whole child. Both an SEL approach and curriculum programs require time for teachers to implement with fidelity. The findings of this study suggest that when school administrators value the role of emotions and value SEL, then teachers feel more supported to develop their social-emotional skills and implement SEL. Administrators reported that they feel responsible for modeling SEL and require the support of their districts or boards to adopt and implement SEL. Administrators

are also the safeguards of time and determine whether teachers can build time into the day.

Administrators need to support teachers by allotting time to dedicate to SEL lessons. Administrators are school leaders who also have an impact on shaping the school culture in which SEL can be nourished.

The findings suggest that there may be a relationship between administrators and the degree of SEL adoption and implementation. In this study teachers reported that SEL curriculum and the degree to which SEL is adopted may rest heavily on administrators. In schools where administrators are not actively encouraging SEL, teachers reported that their own driving motivation were factors in SEL adoption and implementation. Teachers reported a wide-ranging degree of SEL implementation both within their own school, compared to other teachers, and also between schools. Without a fully coordinated effort within schools, where teachers are uniformly implementing SEL and collectively trained in SEL, SEL may not be consistently implemented year to year, grade to grade, or even teacher by teacher. Considering the benefits of universal adoption and implementation of SEL, adoption of SEL, selecting SEL and allowing time for implementation will potentially transform SEL practices.

Teachers who are new to the field and teachers who have been teaching for several decades may not have the social-emotional competencies and SEL skills to effectively practice SEL. Teachers have recognized that learning these skills is one consideration, but the time to implement SEL is also a factor in their ability to implement SEL. Therefore, administrators should assume that SEL practices should be a priority of all teachers despite their years of experience and that to implement SEL they will need the time to do so. Teachers need time to connect to their students and also time to implement SEL. They also need time to connect with their colleagues and receive support from them. While there is a clear expectation for teachers to have the content knowledge expertise to teach academic subjects, the same expectation does not seem to be the case concerning adopting an SEL curriculum or modeling social-emotional competencies while teaching SEL.

Prioritize Social-Emotional and Cultural Learning

The social, emotional, and cultural health of students starts with developing a foundation for teacher's social-emotional, and cultural competencies (Aspen Institute, 2018). To address pervasive societal problems, including equity issues, inclusivity, and systemic racism of historically marginalized communities, we need to fully embrace the importance of SEL and the core competencies which include social awareness development, as a foundational pedagogical approach in education. Embedding SEL theory, practice, modeling and time in preservice and in-service teacher training requires intentionality towards empowering students with self-advocacy skills and social awareness. Explicitly stating that SEL embeds the goals and objectives of diversity, equity, and inclusion will create pathways to revisit school discipline, access to educational opportunities, and deepen teachers understanding of the mechanisms that may obstruct or support student's learning.

Empowering students with the tools to effectively advocate, express their emotions, and feel confident and capable will, in turn, serve all of our students better as members of society. Teachers who are utilizing mental-health strategies, providing human development-related practices, trauma-Informed instruction, and SEL instruction support the overall development of students (Cantor et al., 2019; Garner et al., 2018; Grant 2017). Teachers have the opportunity every day for extended periods to influence how students see themselves within the world outside of the classroom and inspire in possibilities of what life can offer them and how they can be agents of change within their own lives. When teachers are equipped with the skills and dispositions to address students beyond academic content knowledge the potential for developing personal well-being and social well-being amongst all members has the potential for schools to be a transformative place of teaching and learning.

Student mental health and well-being may start with the teachers' social-emotional competencies. Being a kind and caring teacher is important, but teachers fully capable of SEL would be skilled at articulating emotionally effective communication as a way of self-advocacy, be knowledgeable of using mindfulness strategies to prevent stress and in the face of stress, and be

capable of exhibiting empathy for someone struggling. Teachers are expected to be the model for their students, instilling SEL skills and providing optimum SEL experiences to help students succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

As a community of learners, teachers, and students, who see themselves as socially interdependent and deeply connected, can develop a deeper sense of belonging and create a microcosm for what a peaceful and respectful world could look like. Social-emotional learning weaves together cultural, racial, and religious lines so that communities can create belonging and well-being. Social-emotional learning may be one of the core foundations for building a fair, just, and equitable society.

Summary of the Dissertation

Emerging bodies of research have shown that when teachers develop their own social, emotional, and cultural competencies, students have greater academic, social, and emotional success (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Zins, 2004). Overall, the findings in this study suggested that teachers perceive that SEL modeling, instructional support from administrators, and more time to teach SEL are essential to their SEL teaching practice. The findings show that teachers identified perceived gaps in their knowledge and the SEL skills they require to implement SEL. The findings also suggest that when teachers model social-emotional competencies they are in turn modeling the skills students need to thrive.

Research has shown that while it is valuable to demonstrate compassion towards students, it is critical to have a classroom environment where social-emotional learning is explicitly taught so that students can grow their emotional intelligence and effective communication skills (Elias, 2009). Teachers are now tasked with addressing the gamut of student academic challenges and social-emotional needs while also addressing existing challenges that students face. Teachers are required to have proficiency in responding to students impacted by pervasive poverty, trauma, and mental health challenges and be prepared with cultural proficiency to provide students with an empowering learning experience.

SEL is a pathway for teachers to address issues surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion. For teachers to succeed, it is vital that we not only address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students but simultaneously work towards ensuring teacher well-being and make efforts to sustain mentally healthy, emotionally nourished, and cognitively functional adults. Teachers can make a positive impact on students, empowering them with effective communication and self-advocacy tools, teaching them to be self-aware, and providing an emotionally safe environment to make mistakes and feel belonging and connection with their peers and teachers. Teachers are at the very core of students' success and preparing them to be role models of social-emotional competencies and provide teachers with the SEL skills that will serve our student's capacity to grow emotionally, socially, and also academically.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT EMAILS

Recruitment Email to School Administrators

Dear School Administrator [Insert Name]:

I am embarking on a study seeking to learn more about teachers' perceptions of their social-emotional competencies, and practice of social-emotional learning. The study will allow teachers to reflect more deeply on their SEL implementation and investigate the ways in which teachers assess their social-emotional competencies.

This is a timely topic as teachers are faced with greater stress and challenges with students experiencing mental health needs and the findings of the study will apply to school leaders who are in a position to best support teachers. I expect the results will also be disseminated more broadly to practitioners and education scholars too.

I am seeking your cooperation in two ways. First, I would like to conduct a 30-60 minute interview with you and learn about your experience with social-emotional learning and to hear about your teachers training and support with SEL implementation. Second, I would like your assistance in providing an email to your teachers, that I have prepared for you to share, inviting them to participate in the study.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the CSUF institutional review board. For your information, the consent forms that participants will sign are attached.

I appreciate your support in this study. In the event that you would like to share this invitation to participate in the study with your superintendent, please feel free to share this email with them as it describes the nature of the study, it's import and the voluntary participation on part of the teachers.

I am happy to follow up with this email to answer any questions you may have and plan for an interview.

Sincerely,

Tammy Keces (Ed.D. candidate)

Recruitment Email to Teachers

Dear Teacher [Insert Name]:

I am embarking on a study seeking to learn more about teachers' perceptions of their social-emotional competencies and practice of social-emotional learning. The study will allow teachers to reflect more deeply on their SEL implementation and share how teachers assess their social-emotional competencies. This is a timely topic as teachers are faced with greater stress and challenges with students experiencing mental health needs, and the findings of the study will be applicable to teachers and school leaders who are in a position to best support teachers. I expect the results will also be disseminated more broadly to practitioners and education scholars too.

I am seeking your cooperation in two ways. First, I would like to conduct a 45-60-minute interview with you over Zoom and learn about your thoughts and feelings about social-emotional learning. Second, I would like to have you fill out a social-emotional self-reflection survey. This survey should take about 15 minutes to fill out independently. Both your SEL self-assessment and your interview with me will remain completely confidential.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the CSUF institutional review board. For your information, the consent forms that participants will sign are attached.

I appreciate your support in this study.

I am happy to follow up with this email to answer any questions you may have and plan for an interview time that works best for you.

Sincerely,

Tammy Keces, (Ed.D. candidate)

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Name of participant:

Name of school you are leading:

Investigator:

Date:

Duration:

Location (house, school, etc.):

Language of the interview:

Introduction to Interview: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me for this interview. The interview should take about 30-60 minutes. My name is Tammy Keces and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Cal State University, Fullerton. I am also the Head of School at Irvine Hebrew Day School, a private K-8th grade elementary school in Santa Ana, CA. Before starting the school seven years ago, I had my own consulting company called Teaching Positive. I trained teachers in public, private, charter, and Montessori schools in a social-emotional learning approach called Positive Discipline.

For my doctoral study, I am interested in learning about teachers' social-emotional competencies, how teacher training programs support teachers learning social-emotional learning skills and the practice of teaching social-emotional learning skills to their students. I will be referring to social-emotional learning as the acronym SEL. For our purpose today, social-emotional learning (SEL) refers to developing skills related to recognizing and managing emotions, developing care and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively.

I would like to remind you of your rights for this interview. You have the right to stop the interview at any time. You have the right to not answer any questions I ask. Do you have any questions before we begin? At the end of the interview, you will also have a chance to ask additional questions. Let's begin.

Scripted Questions:

1. Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me today. Before we begin, I would like to take a minute to get acquainted. Please take some time to share your thoughts on the role of social-emotional learning in the school and classroom. Can you share more about where you developed these ideas?
2. As a school leader, what are your thoughts regarding social-emotional learning?
3. How do you feel your stress level has been on the job?
 1. Can you share more about ways you are coping with the job?

4. Overall, how are you feeling about your teachers this year? Is it different then in the years prior? If so, how has it been different?
 1. Do you feel like it's going well for them?
 2. Or do you feel like it's not going well for them?
 3. Have you noticed some individuals are doing better than others?
 4. What do you think is attributed to their success or challenges?
5. What challenges, if any, are your teachers facing?
 1. Are they having any challenges with classroom management?
 2. Are they having challenges with curriculum implementation?
 3. How do you feel about collaboration or support from fellow teachers and staff members?
 1. Are there formal times built into your day to collaborate, or is it more informal, impromptu meetings?

Transition: I would like to learn more about your experience with social-emotional learning.

6. Do you have any recollections of covering SEL during your administrative credential program?
 1. Do you recall if the focus on SEL was about the teacher's SEL? The student's SEL? Or the school context or the SEL environment?
 2. Were there any experiential learning activities in the program to help you learn SEL?
 - i. If no, can you share your experience with the other ways you may have learned it?
 3. Can you recall any SEL books or articles you read in your program?
 - i. Can you share any concepts or people that stood out to you from those books or articles?
 - ii. What do you remember stood out most to you about them?
 4. What SEL strategies or skills did you feel you learned in the administrative program?
 5. What classes covered or integrated SEL?
 6. In general, what did you learn about SEL in your program?
7. Have you learned about SEL on your own, outside of your program?
 1. Have you read about SEL on your own? Books? Articles?
 2. If you have ever participated in any SEL training outside of the program can you tell me about that?
8. Can you tell me about the SEL strategies your teachers are using?
 1. Did you feel like they are modeling SEL themselves?
 1. What does it look like when they would feel stressed?
 2. What did you notice about their classroom management strategies?
 1. Were they using rewards and/or punishments?
 1. What kinds of rewards or punishments were they using?

2. Did you think it helped modify student behavior?
 2. Were they praising students or using verbal encouragement?
 1. Can you share any examples?
 2. Do you hear students ever using praise or encouragement with each other?
9. Do you feel that you and the administration support teachers in implementing social-emotional learning instruction in their classrooms?
 1. If yes, can you describe what that looks like?
 2. If no, can you share more about that?
10. Are teachers encouraged to use SEL?
 1. Can you give me examples of SEL specific to general content lessons such as social studies, language arts or science?
 2. Based on your personal experiences, explain the impact of social-emotional learning on academic instruction?
11. What strategies are your teachers currently using to manage their classrooms?
 1. Where did they learn those strategies?
 2. Is there a consistent school policy around classroom management or does it differ from teacher to teacher?
12. Can you talk about your experiences you have encountered addressing teachers' social and emotional needs? How about students?
13. How do you feel your teachers cope with student behavior?
 1. How do you feel your teachers cope with stress?
 2. When it comes to your own social-emotional competencies, what areas do you feel are your strengths?
 3. What areas, if at all, do you feel you could improve on?
14. Based on personal experiences, if you were to advise teachers on how to prepare to use SEL, what would you say?
15. Is there anything I did not ask you that you would like to share?
16. To wrap up, I have a few housekeeping questions. Can you please clarify the following?
 - The spelling of your name?
 - How long you have been a school administrator?
 - How many students do you have in your school?
 - How many teachers do you have in your school?
 - What school and/or district you are in?

Thank you for taking the time to do this interview today. I really appreciate you answering the questions and assisting me in my research study.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: TEACHER

Name of participant:
 Investigator:
 Date:
 Duration:
 Location (house, school, etc.):
 Language of the interview:

Introduction to Interview: Thank you for meeting with me today and for taking the time to for this interview. The interview should take about 45-60 minutes. My name is Tammy Keces and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Cal State University, Fullerton. I am also the Head of School at Irvine Hebrew Day School, a private K-8th elementary school in Santa Ana, CA. Before starting the school seven years ago, I had my own consulting company called Teaching Positive. I trained teachers in public, private, charter, and Montessori schools in a social-emotional learning approach called Positive Discipline.

For my doctoral study, I am interested in learning about teachers' social-emotional competencies and how teacher training programs support teachers learning social-emotional learning skills and how they learn to teach social-emotional learning skills to their students. I will be referring to social-emotional learning as the acronym SEL. For our purpose today, social-emotional learning (SEL) refers to developing skills related to recognizing and managing emotions, developing care and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively.

I would like to remind you of your rights for this interview. You have the right to stop the interview at any time. You have the right to not answer any questions I ask. Do you have any questions before we begin? At the end of the interview, you will also have a chance to ask additional questions. Let's begin.

Scripted Questions:

1. Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me today. Before we begin, I would like to take a minute to get acquainted. Please take some time to share your thoughts on the role of social-emotional learning in the school and classroom. Can you share more about where you developed these ideas?
2. How are you feeling about your teaching position at this time?
 1. Do you feel like it's going well?
 2. Or do you feel like it's not going well?
3. What are you enjoying about your job in general?
 1. What has surprised you about the job?
4. Are you facing any challenges at this time with respect to your job?
 1. Can you share more about the specifics of those challenges?

2. I would like to hear about how you feel things are going with classroom management?
3. Can you also share about your experience overall with curriculum implementation?
4. Can you describe the overall support from your school administration?
 1. Do you feel like SEL is important to your school administration? What makes you think that?
5. How do you feel about collaboration or support from fellow teachers and staff members?
 1. Are there formal times built into your day to collaborate or is it more informal, impromptu meetings?
6. How is your stress level on the job?
 1. How are you coping with the stress of the job?
 2. Do you feel like SEL is important to your school administration? What makes you think that?

Transition: I would like to learn more about your experience training and professional development with social-emotional learning.

6. Do you have any recollections of learning about SEL during your teacher training program learning?
 1. Do you recall if the focus on SEL was about the teacher's SEL? The student's SEL? Or the school context or the SEL environment?
 2. What learning activities, if at all, did you do in the program to help you learn SEL?
 3. What books related to SEL did you read in your program?
 4. What SEL strategies or skills did you feel you learned in the program?
 5. What classes covered or integrated SEL?
 6. In general, what did you learn about SEL in your preservice program?
7. What have you learned about SEL on your own, outside of your teaching program or school inservice?
 1. Can you share what you have you read about SEL on your own? Books? Articles?
 2. If you have ever participated in any SEL training or professional development? Can you tell me about that experience?
8. Going back to when you were during your fieldwork experience, can tell me about the how the mentor teachers SEL looked from your perspective?
 1. Did you feel like they were modeling SEL themselves?
 1. What did it look like when they would feel stressed?
 2. What did you notice about their classroom management strategies?
 1. Were they using rewards and/or punishments?
 1. What kinds of rewards of punishments were they using?
 2. Did you think it was helpful in modifying student behavior?
 2. Were they praising students or using verbal encouragement?

1. Can you share any examples?
 2. Do you hear students ever using praise or encouragement with each other?
9. Do you feel that you support implementing social-emotional learning instruction in your classroom?
1. If yes, can you describe what that looks like? If no, can you share why that may be the case?
 2. Can you think of an example of how you teach social-emotional learning in your classroom?
10. Are you encouraged to use SEL across the curriculum?
1. If yes, can you give me examples of SEL specific to general content lessons such as social studies, language arts or science?
 2. Based on your personal experiences, explain the impact you feel SEL has on both academic instruction on social and emotional learning?
11. What strategies are you currently using to manage your classroom?
1. Where did you learn those strategies?
 2. Do you find them to be helpful?
12. Can you talk about your experiences with the challenges you have encountered addressing students' social and emotional needs?
13. How do you feel you cope with student behavior?
1. When it comes to your own SEL, what areas do you feel like you need the most assistance with?
14. Based on personal experiences, if you were to advise another teacher who will work on social and emotional learning with their students, what would you say?
15. Is there anything I did not ask you that you would like to share?
16. To wrap up I have a few house cleanings questions. Can you please clarify the following?
1. The grade you are teaching-
 2. How many students you have in your class?
 3. What is the general demographic of the class racially, gender-?
 4. The school or district you are teaching in-
 5. What teacher training program did you participate in?
 1. Was the training program face to face or hybrid?
 2. What attracted you to this program?
 3. When did you start the program and when did you complete it?

Transition: After our interview I would like you to complete a social-emotional competencies self-reflection tool. I would like you to complete the tool and return it back to me in the next 3-5 days. I will email you the tool and you can complete the tool and email it back to me. The tool will ask you to reflect on what you identify as your social-emotional strengths or what areas you feel would help you grow. You may score the assessment yourself and see how the ratings you selected suggest areas of strength and areas of growth. You may also leave the assessment unscored and I can score it for you. I can email the completed scored assessment back to you once it has been scored.

Thank you for participating in the interview. I appreciate the time you took to complete the interview and speak with me. I look forward to receiving your social-emotional self-assessment in the next 3-5 days.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Study Title: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE OF SEL

Researchers: Tammy Keces (Ed.D. candidate), California State University Fullerton

You are being asked to take part in a research study carried out by the researchers listed above. This consent form explains the study. Please read the form carefully, taking as much time as you need. Please feel free to explain anything you don't understand.

What is this study about?

This research study is being conducted to understand teachers' social-emotional competencies, how teachers are trained, prepared or supported to teach SEL, and how teachers implement it.

What will I be asked to do if I am in this study?

{School Administrators and Teachers} You will participate in an interview that will last about 30-60 minutes and take place in a location you choose. The interview will ask you to share your feelings about your experiences about your teacher program in general, school site training and how your experience has been with implementing social-emotional learning. The interview will ask your opinions about your SEL curriculum experiences, professional development for SEL, resources you have accessed for SEL, and will ask you to reflect on your social-emotional competencies.

Are there any benefits or risks to me if I am in this study?

There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study. The results of this study may help teacher training programs, school administrators, and policymakers understand how to better support teachers in developing their social-emotional competencies and implementing SEL in the classroom. There is no foreseeable risk to your participation.

Will my information be kept anonymous or confidential?

The data for this study will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. We will keep all electronic files, including audio files of interviews, in a password protected cloud storage that only the researchers can access. You will be assigned a pseudonym for our notes, transcriptions of the interview, analysis, and reports. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous.

No published results will identify you, and your name will not be associated with the findings.

The data for this study will be kept for five years until the publication of the results.

Are there any costs or payments for being in this study?

There will be no costs to you for taking part in this study.

Who can I talk to if I have questions?

If you have questions about this study or the information in this form, please contact Tammy Keces at tammykeces@fullerton.edu or call 949-633-6520. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or would like to report a concern or complaint about this study, please contact the Institutional Review Board at (657) 278-7640, or e-mail irb@fullerton.edu

What are my rights as a research study volunteer?

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to be a part of this study. There will be no penalty to you if you choose not to take part. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

Your signature on this form means that:

- You understand the information given to you in this form
- You have been able to ask the researcher questions and state any concerns
- The researcher has responded to your questions and concerns
- You believe you understand the research study and the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

Statement of Consent

I have carefully read and/or I have had the terms used in this consent form and their significance explained to me. By signing below, I agree that I am at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in this project. You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep.

Name of Participant (please print) _____

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

- I give permission to audio record the interview
- I do not give permission to audio record the interview.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

APPENDIX E

TABLE MAPPING RQ TO METHODS

What do I need to Know? (Research Questions)	Why do I need to Know This? (Goals)	What Kind of Data Will Answer the Questions? (Methods)	Analysis Methods	Potential Conclusions	Alternative Explanations (Validity Threats)	Methods to Investigate Alternative Explanations
Q1. What social-emotional skills, dispositions, and competencies do teachers and school administrators identify as important to teaching?	To understand what skills teachers, obtain so they develop a foundation to implementing SEL in their classrooms	Interview teachers and school administrators using researcher developed interview questions and an established survey tool to assess teachers' ability to cope with student's challenging behavior Interview teachers to find out what learning took place and how confident they felt on the skills obtained to implement SEL	Data analysis of interview results. Coding transcription of interview teachers	Teachers are not receiving a significant degree of learning around SEL in their pre-service programs and are ill-prepared to implement this critical area of learning	Teachers are unskilled even though they receive training The implementation of SEL is limited to the pre-existing personality of the teacher and the program provides as much SEL training as state requires	Observations of teaching Review of various SEL programs
Q2. How, if at all, do teachers incorporate social and emotional learning into instruction and curricula?	To understand if there a gap in student learning outcomes, academic achievement between the program and new teachers? To understand how preservice programs, support new teachers in implementing SEL	Survey of how teachers feel they are doing implementing Copies of the interview questions Explanation of how teachers are doing while implementing SEL	Coding transcription Interview questions Document analysis of SEL curriculum in the CSU Fullerton program	It may not make a difference if teachers learned SEL in their preservice program Professional development may be just as effective after teachers start to implement SEL	The timing of the training may be important in determining when and how to support teachers	Survey or interview individuals who have implemented various SEL curricula and ask about their training experiences

What do I need to Know? (Research Questions)	Why do I need to Know This? (Goals)	What Kind of Data Will Answer the Questions? (Methods)	Analysis Methods	Potential Conclusions	Alternative Explanations (Validity Threats)	Methods to Investigate Alternative Explanations
Q3. What forms of teachers' social and emotional learning training, development, and supports are perceived as being most helpful to teachers working in K-12 schools?	To understand the process that allows teachers to be successful	<p>Transcriptions of interviews with principals' teachers who have experienced different pieces of training</p> <p>Data collected how successful the students were before or after a training</p> <p>Age, gender and ethnicity of the candidate</p>	<p>Interviews of principals and teachers</p> <p>Observations teachers implementing SEL</p> <p>Analyze survey results</p>	Once teachers get into their teaching placement, they significantly grow their skills if they are in place to support them. However, teacher burnout and attrition may be due to their lack of SEL skills.	Teachers need insight into their own practice and identify what is causing them to be limited in their implementation. They can "blame" their lack of SEL training, lack of curriculum understanding of SEL, school culture when it can be one of these three variables alone.	Conduct interviews with teachers who have experienced multiple teacher training programs to compare and identify which ones as having strong SEL practices embedded in their program.

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW CODEBOOK

Below are the research questions and the associated coding labels. These coding labels were created based off the frequencies and patterns in the 481 excerpts. Inductive coding was used to base the code off the data itself.

Question 1: What social-emotional skills, dispositions, and competencies do teachers identify as important to their teaching?

Q1 Coding labels:

- Modeling SEL
- SEL Competencies
- SEL Curriculum
- Role of Emotions
- Cultural Competency
- Definition of SEL
- Development of SEL ideas, concepts

Question 2: How, if at all, do teachers incorporate social and emotional learning into instruction and curricula?

Q2 Coding labels:

- SEL Practices of Teachers
- SEL Implementation
- SEL and Academics
- SEL Practices
- School Culture
- School Values SEL
- Student Teacher Relationships
- Belonging
- SEL and SPED

Question 3: What are forms of teachers' social and emotional learning training, development, and supports perceived as being most helpful to teachers working in K-12 schools?

Q3 Coding labels:

- Teacher SEL Training
- Admin Role of SEL
- Parents and SEL
- Public School SEL
- Role of District and Board Decisions
- SEL Admin Competencies
- Teacher Stress
- SEL Preservice Education Admin
- Teacher Burnout
- Admin Stress
- SEL Preservice Teachers

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