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Promoting Positive Student Development: A Qualitative Case Study of School-Wide Social and Emotional Learning in an Elementary School

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Educational Administration

by

Kathleen Theodore

B.A. Dillard University, 1980
M.A. Xavier University, 1986

December, 2018

DEDICATION

To my father, the late Herbert Theodore, Sr. and my mom, Joyce Theodore, for your belief in education as the gateway to success and for always encouraging me to do my best. You will forever be the wind beneath my wings.

To my daughter, Ariel, for your timeless wisdom and love. I have watched you grow into a beautiful young lady, stood proud as you received your master's degree and began your professional career. You lifted me up and helped me reach this goal. I look forward to supporting you with your PhD journey.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
Abstract	vii
Chapter 1	1
Introduction to the Problem	1
Rationale for Social and Emotional Learning	5
Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning	7
Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning for Students	8
Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning for Teachers	9
Social and Emotional Learning Programs	10
Problem Statement	12
Research Question	13
Definition of Terms	14
Summary	16
Chapter 2	18
Theoretical Framework and Literature Review	18
Theoretical Framework	18
Literature Review	24
Historical Perspective: School Reform	24
School Reforms Prior to 1945	26
School Reforms Post-1945	29
The No Child Left Behind Act	30
The Every Student Succeeds Act	32
Current Social and Emotional Learning Practices in Schools	34
Classroom-Based Social and Emotional Programs	36
Multi-Component Social and Emotional Learning Programs	40
4Rs Social and Emotional Learning Program	41
Responsive Classroom	45
School-wide Social and Emotional Learning Practices	46
Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Social and Emotional Learning	47
Stand-alone Approaches Combined with MTSS	49
Continuum of Approaches	52
Conclusion	54
Chapter 3	57
Methodology	57
Rationale for Qualitative Research	57
Rationale for Case Study Research	58
Case Selection	60
Site Selection Criteria	61
Description of the Case	62
Description of School’s Social and Emotional Learning Programs	64
Data Collection	65
Data Analysis	72
Validation Strategies	74
Ethical Considerations	75

Researcher Identity	77
Chapter 4	81
Findings.....	82
Themes	82
Theme 1: Routines and Shared Practices	82
Theme 2: Physical Environment of Classrooms	91
Theme 3: Common Language.....	103
Theme 4: School Family	114
Theme 5: Leadership Support for SEL	123
Summary	151
Chapter 5	152
Discussion	152
Summary of Findings.....	152
Integration of Findings to Research	153
Aligned and Consistent Predictable Experiences	153
Active and Visible Leadership Support	157
Transformative Leadership Practices.....	160
School-wide SEL Programming	161
Implications for Schools	163
Implications for School Districts	165
Implications for Educational Change.....	167
Recommendations for Future Research	168
Delimitations of the Study	169
Limitations	169
Concluding Remarks.....	170
References	172
Appendix A– School Selection Criteria: IC Map	199
Appendix B– Selection Criteria: Principal Screening Interview	200
Appendix C– Sample Schedule for Data Collection.....	203
Appendix D– Observation Protocol.....	204
Appendix E– Interview Protocol for Principal	207
Appendix F– Interview Protocol for Teachers.....	211
Appendix G– Interview Protocol for School Leadership Team Member	215
Appendix H– Focus Group Protocol for Teachers	219
Appendix I– Focus Group Protocol for School Leadership Team	224
Appendix J– Sign-In Sheets for Focus Groups.....	228
Appendix K– Copyright Permission Letter	230
Appendix L– UNO Letter of Consent for Adults	231
Appendix M– UNO IRB Approval Letter	232
Vita.....	233

LIST OF FIGURES

1 Water Fountain Visual Routine	83
2 Group Expectations.....	94
3 S.T.A.R. Breathing Technique.....	110
4 Noticing Visual Routine	116

Abstract

Many schools have adopted social and emotional learning programs, but few schools have achieved significant impacts on student outcomes because of challenges with implementation quality. Although there is guidance on selecting evidence-based social and emotional learning programs for classroom use, schools need guidance on how best to integrate social and emotional learning in context. This study examines how an elementary school integrated school-wide social and emotional learning into its daily practices, using a qualitative single case study grounded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The study, which was conducted during an eight-week period, identifies promising practices that could be beneficial for implementing and improving social and emotional learning practices. Data collection includes multiple sources of data, such as observations, document analyses, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. Drawing upon Stake's (1995) process for data analysis, the following themes emerge: (1) routines and shared practices, (2) physical environment and classrooms, (3) common language (4) school family, and (5) leadership support for social and emotional learning. The implications of this study support understandings of what integrated school-wide social and emotional learning programming look like in an elementary school context.

Keywords: school-wide, integrated, social and emotional learning, SEL, school micro-contexts, elementary school, implementation, school-wide SEL programming.

Chapter I

Introduction to the Problem

Students need more than academic skills to succeed. Recent public polls and research findings indicate a broad consensus on the need for schools to teach a wide range of skills that include academics as well as social and emotional competencies (National Research Council, 2012). Developing students' social and emotional skills has been associated with the likelihood of students having better academic achievement and success in both school and life along with enhancements in the quality of their learning environments (Gabrieli et al., 2015). Social and emotional learning (SEL) is influenced by multiple contexts, such as school, family, and community environments. Since students are in school for a significant amount of time, schools are a vital setting for promoting students' social and emotional development (Hull, 2011). SEL is defined as "the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (CASEL, 2015, p. 1). Children develop social and emotional competence through high-quality, safe and supportive environments in which they feel valued, a sense of belonging, and engagement in learning (CASEL, 2013). Thus, schools are increasingly adopting (SEL) programs to foster positive student development (Dusenbury, Zadrazil, Mart, & Weissberg, 2011; Elias, 2010; Hemmeter, Snyder, Kinder, & Artman, 2011). In a nationally representative survey of more than 600 prekindergarten to twelfth grade teachers, 88% of teachers reported that instruction in SEL occurs on some level in their schools (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). However, research studies reveal that overall student outcomes from school efforts in SEL have been modest because of insufficient implementation (Durlak,

Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). As a result, students are not acquiring the full benefits of SEL on school and life outcomes.

While the prevalence of SEL programs is growing, merely adopting an SEL program is insufficient for achieving positive outcomes (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Although SEL programs vary in scope, effective SEL programs “foster the development of five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making” (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 406). High-quality implementation and well-designed, evidence-based SEL programs can produce positive academic, social, and behavioral outcomes for students (Durlak et al., 2011; Hanson, Dietsch, & Zheng, 2012). Such programs are characterized by explicit teaching that is active, focused, and sequenced. In addition, students have more positive outcomes when teachers effectively integrate SEL programs into their practice, and when programs are thoroughly integrated school-wide into daily interactions, relationships, and school practices (CASEL, 2015; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). However, many schools do not provide SEL programs consistently and most instruction of SEL programs is often primarily focused in the classroom. Several studies have shown that SEL is beneficial to areas of the school, such as the playground, hallways, and bathrooms in which students have often reported harmful encounters with other students (Astor, 2001; Cash, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2014). In many schools, SEL is not an integral part of the school’s mission; rather, it is rarely integrated into academic content and rarely applied to academic content, daily interactions, and school practices (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). In addition, while there are recommendations on evidence-based SEL programs, many schools do not adopt an evidence-based SEL program, which greatly reduces the likelihood for successful student and school outcomes.

Besides adopting evidence-based SEL programs, implementation of SEL in schools is often not comprehensive. Many schools implement numerous social and behavioral programs contributing to a fragmented approach that impedes the likelihood for positive outcomes (Stoiber, 2011). As a result, these schools are not effectively teaching SEL skills in order to produce the desired outcomes of academic, behavioral, and life success. Current recommendations from SEL scholars emphasize that schools should adopt a comprehensive school-wide approach that includes utilizing classroom-based SEL programming and school-wide strategies to integrate SEL into all settings of the school (Oberle, Domitrovich, Meyers, & Weissberg, 2016). SEL programming is not synonymous with the sole use of SEL programs or curricula. Effective SEL programming typically includes the adoption of an evidence-based SEL program along with providing the school-wide supports that will create the conditions in which students can acquire social and emotional competence (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). School-wide supports include providing a safe, healthy, and supporting environment for fostering students' development of social and emotional skills through coordinated SEL policies and practices across all contexts within the school, such as the classroom, playground, and hallways (CASEL, 2015; Oberle et al., 2016). Although a national survey revealed that 88% of preschool, elementary, middle, and high school teachers reported that instruction in SEL occurs on some level in their schools, only 44% of teachers reported that SEL skills are taught school-wide (Bridgeland et al., 2013). In addition, teachers also reported that their schools lacked a supportive system to promote SEL. For example, an important support that teachers need is professional development. Professional development supports high-quality implementation of SEL programming, and the probability that schools' delivery of SEL

is not implemented in a fragmented or piecemeal manner and increases the amount of practice and reinforcement that students receive (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Oberle et al., 2016).

Although there is ample guidance for schools on the effectiveness of pre-existing SEL programs, there is a lack of evidence-based guidance on how to integrate instruction of SEL skills into the daily practices of the school (Greenberg et al., 2003; Jones & Bouffard, 2012). One reason for the lack of evidence-based guidance is that school context differs in schools. Research has shown that school context matters and plays a major role in determining whether a program works, under what circumstances and for whom, as well as the likelihood that the program will be highly implemented with fidelity (Anyon, 2016; Stoiber, 2011). Given the number of programs that schools could be implementing, comprehensive school-wide SEL programming suggests that schools need evidence-based guidance on combining, adapting, and integrating existing programs (Greenberg et al., 2003). However, very little research has been conducted on the key ingredients of SEL programs. Schools could benefit by knowing “(1) which program aspects should be maintained as is, and which can be eliminated, reduced, or modified to suit different school situations, (2) which are the most important pieces of interventions that educators should learn to deliver and emphasize when conducting programs, and (3) what to measure in terms of program theory, implementation, and program outcomes” (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullota, 2015, p. 13). Adopting school-wide SEL programming is a major concern for effectively promoting SEL in schools (Oberle et al., 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine how an elementary school integrates school-wide SEL programming into its daily practices.

Rationale for Social and Emotional Learning

Since the last decade, there has been a growing national interest for SEL in schools as a method to foster positive student development and prevent negative behaviors (Theodore, 2015; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004). Advancements in the field of SEL research have established that SEL programming can significantly improve students' academic achievement in K–12 schools as well as predict and improve the likelihood that students are successful in their academic and career outcomes (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017; Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015; Theodore, 2015). SEL is important given the various factors that hinder students' positive development and ultimately their success in school and life. According to Child Trends, child well-being encompasses the whole child in areas such as “physical health, development and safety, psychological and emotional development, social development and behavior, and cognitive development and educational achievement” (Moore, 2013, p. 3; Theodore, 2015). Given the scope of child well-being outcomes, one can readily surmise that how well children are doing in all areas of development is critical in order for students “to be knowledgeable, responsible, socially skilled, healthy, caring, and contributing citizens” (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 466). A review of data on child well-being depicts the numerous challenges children face in the United States.

In the United States, mental health issues are very common in childhood. According to the 2016 Child Mind Institute Children's Mental Health Report, one in five or 20% of children suffers from a mental health disorder (Child Mind Institute, 2016). This is equivalent to about 17.1 million children. The impact on children's school performance is often detrimental because the onset of mental health disorders usually occurs during critical stages of social, emotional, and academic development (Child Mind Institute, 2016). In fact, according to the Children's Mental

Health Report, 50% of mental disorders occur before the age of 15 and 75% occur before the age of 24. Coupled with the reality that most students do not have access to proper care and the shortages that exist with mental health professionals, these disorders can have profound effects on students' ability to learn, behave, and express their emotions. For example, mental health risks in first grade have been correlated with a five percent decrease in academic performance in two years (Child Mind Institute, 2016). Additionally, the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of high school students revealed that 19% reported being bullied at school; 24% were involved in a physical fight; and 32% experienced sadness or hopelessness (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

Thus, schools are challenged with educating numerous students with mental health issues, and students who engage in multiple high-risk conduct such as violence, delinquency, and self-destructive behaviors; however, schools are also challenged with educating students who lack social and emotional competencies (Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004). For example, 20% of children enter kindergarten lacking the necessary social and emotional skills for school readiness and success, such as difficulty following directions, and working in groups, as well as acting out and exhibiting disruptive behaviors (Whitted, 2011). In comparison to their peers, children who lack social and emotional skills in kindergarten had a higher probability of being retained in kindergarten as well as during the three successive school years (Bettencourt, Gros, & Ho, 2016). Another related factor to mental health that highlights the need for SEL in schools is poverty. Research on poverty has led to an increased understanding on how poverty adds tremendous stress on families and negatively impacts children's cognitive, physical, and mental health development (Luby et al., 2013; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012). The 2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book revealed that fewer children are living in poverty, with a decrease from 22% to 19%. In

spite of this improvement, one in five children still live in poverty (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). Although difficulties in social, emotional, and behavior rank in the top five for chronic childhood disabilities, these difficulties are twice as likely to affect children who live in poverty (Halfon, Houtrow, Larson, & Newacheck, 2012; Larson & Halfon, 2010). Poverty can prevent children from having stable and nurturing homes that foster and provide opportunities and ensure positive and healthy development, which is necessary to succeed in school and life (American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research and the Brookings Institution, 2015).

Overall, the results from child well-being data reflect the changes in the American family that occurred during the twentieth century, such as an increase in divorce rates, single-family homes, and the employment of mothers outside the home (Weissberg, Kumpfer, & Seligman, 2003). Consequently, parental stress and absence from the home resulted in reduced time for quality parent and child interactions, as well as the ability of the family to prevent children from harmful external influences of peers, media, and community (Greenberg et al., 2003). The overall impact in the United States has produced widespread negative effects. Given this account on child wellbeing in the United States, schools are pressured to do more than teach academic skills (Greenberg et al., 2003). As a result, these societal changes have caused a corresponding shift in school practices with many schools adopting numerous prevention and intervention programs to address various student issues, resulting in a very fragmented approach with reduced impact on positive student development.

Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning

Various terms have been used in reference to SEL such as soft skills, non-cognitive skills, emotional intelligence, grit, mindfulness, and moral and character education (Weissberg, 2016).

Historically, schools have held a broader mission that included the social and emotional development of students; however, past school reform efforts such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (United States Department of Education, 2001), which measured school performance from academic proficiency in reading and mathematics, have hindered schools' ability to focus time and resources on students' social and emotional development (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). However, concerns regarding students' problem behaviors, such as bullying and school violence, have resulted in a growing interest in SEL as well as a growing evidence-base in SEL programs leading to positive outcomes (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Moreover, the Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA) has currently replaced NCLB. Although ESSA promotes the use of nonacademic skills as measures of school performance, the new law has not been implemented fully in order to determine its impact on schools and SEL.

Benefits of social and emotional learning for students. Both longitudinal and randomized controlled studies, such as the Perry Preschool Study and the Dunedin Study (Gabrieli et al., 2015; Theodore, 2015) have illustrated numerous positive outcomes in academics, careers, and the well-being of students when they have strong SEL skills. For example, students have a higher probability of completing high school and college; have greater academic achievement, and financial success as a result of gaining SEL competence (Gabrieli et al., 2015; Theodore, 2015). In addition, “a major meta-analysis of 213 randomized-control group studies of kindergarten to twelfth grade students who participated in SEL programs demonstrated (a) improved social and emotional skills, attitudes about themselves, others, and school; (b) fewer conduct problems such as disruptive classroom behavior and aggression; (c) reduced emotional distress such as depression and stress; (d) improved academic test scores and school grades, including an 11-percentile gain in academic achievement” (Durlak et al., 2011;

SEL Research Group, 2010, p. 1). Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, and Weissberg (2017) extended Durlak and colleagues' meta-analysis by analyzing the follow-up effects of SEL programs. They found that students who participated in SEL programs performed significantly better on indicators of wellbeing when compared to the control group at post intervention follow-up. Sklad et al., (2012) analyzed 75 studies of SEL programs with the results indicating "beneficial effects on seven major outcomes: social skills, antisocial behavior, substance abuse, positive self-image, academic achievement, mental health, and prosocial behavior" (p. 892). Furthermore, academic and social and emotional competence are interconnected, which means that there is a reciprocal relationship between them (Farrington, et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2017; Oberle et al., 2016). Social and emotional competence can improve academic skills and having better academic skills can improve students social and emotional competence (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). Given the increasing demands of accountability, academic expectations, and instructional time, instruction in SEL seems to be a viable and efficient way to achieve successful student outcomes.

Benefits of social and emotional learning for teachers. Besides positive outcomes for students, research has cited that the use of SEL programs has shown positive benefits for teachers. When SEL is implemented effectively, time spent on classroom management is greatly reduced (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Less time spent on classroom management fosters a positive classroom environment as well as provides more time for learning tasks. Studies have shown that teachers who implement SEL programs also experience higher levels of teaching efficacy, job satisfaction, and personal accomplishment in comparison to teachers who are not implementing a SEL program (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007; Domitrovich et al., 2015). Teachers' ability to effectively manage social and

emotional challenges is also very important to the school and classroom setting. For example, the consequences for classrooms and students when teachers do not effectively handle social and emotional challenges include reduced student time on task, increase in behavior problems, and reliance on punitive discipline (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). These consequences contribute to a negative classroom climate as well as teacher burnout (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Effective SEL programming can help teachers manage and cope with stress by building and supporting their social and competence (Elbertson, Brackett, & Weissberg, 2009). However, most teachers do not receive sufficient professional development to learn how to promote students' social and emotional development. A national survey of principals revealed that 60% of principals believe that teachers need more professional development to implement SEL (DePaoli, Atwell, & Bridgeland, 2017). Consequently, the report suggested that policymakers and funders should make SEL professional development and implementation a priority. Nevertheless, a commitment from both teachers and school leaders is necessary to support a healthy, warm, and safe school environment through school-wide practices that foster SEL (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Similarly, Bryk's (2010) identification of five essential supports for school improvement from his study of 100 successful elementary schools aligns with the necessary supports for effective SEL programming. In particular, Bryk (2010) emphasized strong, positive leadership, developing the professional capacity of staff, developing a student-centered learning environment, parent and community involvement, and instructional guidance.

Social and Emotional Learning Programs

The 2013 CASEL Guide provides elementary schools with a consumer's guide to assist with selecting and planning evidence-based SEL programs or curricula. As previously

mentioned, these SEL programs vary in scope and focus. There are several examples of evidence-based SEL elementary programs such as *Caring School Community (CSC)*, *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHs)*, *Positive Action (PA)*, *Responsive Classroom (RC)*, and *Second Step*. These programs provide a glimpse of what evidence-based SEL instruction could look like in elementary classrooms. According to Dusenbury, Calin, Domitrovich, and Weissberg (2015), “evidence-based SEL programs use one or more of the following four approaches to promoting social and emotional competence: (a) free-standing lessons; (b) general teaching practices; (c) integration of skill instruction and practices that support SEL within the context of an academic curriculum; (d) guidance to administrators and school leaders on how to facilitate SEL as a school-wide initiative” (p. 2–5). Free-standing lessons consist of sequenced, active, focused, and explicit teaching of social and emotional competencies on developmentally appropriate topics such as identifying or labeling feelings, techniques for calming down and guiding choices. SEL programs that focus on general teaching practices focus on creating positive classroom climate by fostering positive teacher-student interactions, routines, and structures as well as instructional practices in order to support students’ social and emotional development. On the other hand, some evidence-based SEL programs are taught as part of the curriculum, such as language arts or social studies. While all of these programs are promising, schools need contextual information on how they can be delivered effectively while simultaneously making adaptations to fit the contextual needs of the school. Many studies have shown that schools and teachers naturally make adaptations to programs to fit the context of the school, but little is known about how these adaptations affect student outcomes (Becker, Bradshaw, Domitrovich, & Ialongo, 2013). As previously mentioned, research knowledge on the key or active ingredients of SEL programs and understanding ways in which schools can

make decisions to adapt, combine, and integrate evidence-based SEL programs is necessary for improving school practices and advancing the field of SEL by improving programs (Weissberg et al., 2015). Having this information could help schools understand how to identify effective strategies to integrate SEL into regular school practices (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Problem Statement

Schools have embraced the need for the development of students' social and emotional skills by increasingly adopting SEL programs (Dusenbury et al., 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012); however, most schools are not effectively implementing SEL programs to support the development of students' SEL skills (Durlak et al., 2011; Dusenbury et al., 2011). SEL programs are often implemented for half-hour or hour-long weekly sections of classes, rarely integrated into daily life in schools, and are focused primarily on the classroom (Greenberg et al., 2003; Taylor & Dymnicki, 2007), rather than other spaces in the school, where adult supervision is more indirect and SEL is more crucial for student success. SEL skills are also needed in other spaces in the school such as playgrounds, lunchrooms, and hallways because students have indicated that these areas are where they feel most unsafe (Astor et al., 2001; LaRusso, Brown, Jones, & Aber, 2009). Moreover, SEL studies have shown that students are more likely to benefit when attention to SEL skills is included in places outside of classrooms with continuous and intentional monitoring of student behavior (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). While there is evidence-based guidance for schools on selecting effective SEL programs (CASEL, 2013), schools often do not have sufficient guidance on how to best integrate SEL skills into the regular day-to-day school practices. As a result, schools are getting limited results with their investment on SEL programs (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Stoiber, 2011).

Research Questions

Based on a review of the literature and an exploration of current school-based SEL approaches, the following question served as the overarching research question for this study:

How does an elementary school integrate school-wide SEL programming into daily school practices to support students' social and emotional development?

- 1. What are the critical components of the school-wide SEL approach?*
- 2. How does leadership impact the programming decisions and implementation strategies?*
- 3. What has the school staff learned during implementation of SEL?*

An instrumental qualitative case study (Stake, 1985) was utilized to enable the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of integrated school-wide SEL practices in its natural setting—the school. Through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994, 1995) ecological systems theory, this study examined an elementary school's efforts to integrate school-wide SEL programming in classrooms and micro-contexts such as hallways, lunchrooms, playgrounds, and gymnasiums. Furthermore, this study did not solely examine the implementation of SEL programs or strategies that were used in an isolated or fragmented way; rather, the analysis focused on programs or strategies that were integrated in all school micro-contexts. Additionally, this study focused on a collaborative view of leadership that included the principal, a school leadership team, or individuals that the principal recommended.

Answering the research questions for this study involved examining a school-wide SEL approach that was integrated into the daily school practices and interactions of an elementary school, which included and moved beyond the classroom to examining the ecology of the school. Exploring ways in which schools integrate school-wide SEL could assist educators with

developing meaningful, sustained, and integrated SEL approaches that create optimal conditions for students' development of SEL skills.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are applicable for the purposes of this study on school-wide integrated SEL:

1. Cognitive-behavior therapy – based on the belief that most emotional and behavioral reactions are learned and can be unlearned through thinking and problem-solving techniques (Meichenbaum, 1977).
2. Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) – national leading organization in promoting academic, social and emotional learning for all students.
3. Ecological model – a developmental theory that views human “development as taking place in a nested and interactive set of contexts ranging from immediate (e.g., family, peer system, classroom, school) to more distal (e.g., cultural and political) contexts” (as cited in Jones & Bouffard, 2012, p. 4).
4. Emotional intelligence – “defined as the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (as cited in Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 89)
5. Grit– “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1087).
6. Mindfulness– “Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us” (Foundation for a Mindful Society, 2014, para. 2).

7. Moral and Character Education— supports the social, emotional, and ethical development of students (Character Education Partnership, n.d.)
8. National Commission of Social, Emotional, and Academic Development— developed in September 2016, the commission consists of leaders from various sectors, such as education, military, healthy, and business who work to support SEL efforts in K–12 schools in order to successfully integrate social, emotional, and academic development (SEAD) in schools.
9. Non-cognitive skills— “include a range of personality and motivational habits and attitudes that facilitate functioning well in school. Noncognitive traits, skills, and characteristics include perseverance, motivation, self-control, and other aspects of conscientiousness” (Rosen, Glennie, Dalton, Lennon, & Bozick, 2010, p. 1).
10. Social and Emotional Competencies—CASEL’s five interrelated sets of interpersonal, cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies
 - a. Self-awareness—The ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
 - b. Self-management—The ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.
 - c. Social awareness—The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- d. Relationship skills—The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
- e. Responsible decision making—The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

(CASEL, 2013, p. 9)

11. Social and emotional learning – “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (CASEL, 2015, p. 1).

12. Soft skills—“key skills, core skills, key competencies, or employability skills, are those desirable qualities that apply across a variety of jobs and life situations—traits such as integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility, professionalism, flexibility, and teamwork” (Greene, 2016, para. 4).

Summary

Many schools are adopting SEL programs to prevent problem behaviors and to promote positive student development through SEL programs. However, many of these programs are not effectively implemented and integrated into the daily school interactions and practices, which reduces the likelihood of program and student success. Although there is ample research on

evidence-based programs, there is little research guidance on effective ways in which schools can integrate SEL into their daily interactions and practices. Through an ecological model, this study utilized case study methodology to explore and understand an elementary school's strategies for integrating school-wide SEL programming into their daily practices as a means to support students' development of SEL skills.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter provides a description of the theoretical framework followed by a review of the literature. The theoretical framework for this study is Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological systems theory, which describes how schools serve as a unique context for influencing student's social and emotional development. The literature review includes a historical overview of past school reform efforts and educational goals in relation to SEL as well as research on current SEL practices in schools.

Theoretical Framework

Current understanding of SEL programming is deeply rooted in psychology and neuroscience focusing on preventing problem behaviors, mental illness, and behavioral-emotional disorders (Cohen, 2006; Elias, Parker, Kash, Weissberg, & O'Brien, 2008). Several bodies of scholarship including social learning theory (Bandura, 1973; Rotter, 1954), cognitive-behavioral therapy (Meichenbaum, 1977), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Saarni, 2007) and an ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lewin, 1951) have influenced the design of effective SEL programs and the implementation of SEL in school-based contexts. This study was grounded in an ecological model, which views schools and classrooms as systems that serve as important contexts for children's SEL development in which learning is a social experience that can be facilitated or hindered by relationships and interactions with peers, teachers, school staff, and administrators (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). Instead of attempting to change individual children through a planned curriculum or intervention, the ecological view advocates changing the system of relationships and culture that students inhabit (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, [ASCD] 2015). Thus, the following two conditions

are necessary for effective school-wide SEL programming— promoting the social and emotional development of students across curriculum and school contexts and creating the conditions for SEL through a caring, safe, and supportive school environment.

Because schools represent a unique context for supporting the development of SEL skills (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006), Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological model provides a useful tool for focusing attention on potentially important aspects of the environment. In addition, because schools and classrooms operate as social systems (Jones & Bouffard, 2012), the ecological model’s conceptualization of the school environment as a context for children’s development formed a useful basis for this study of how SEL is integrated in the school and classroom setting.

Ecological Model

As a way of conceptualizing environments as contexts of development, Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) theory envisioned the ecological environment as a set of five nested and interactive systems—microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems—that move from an innermost layer to a distal or outermost layer. The microsystem consisting of settings such as family, school, peer group, and work place is the innermost layer and represents the closest context to the child. The next system is the mesosystem, which is a system of microsystems linking processes that occur between two or more contexts of the developing child. The third system, which is the exosystem, is similar to the mesosystem in that it consists of connections and processes occurring between two or more contexts; however, the difference is that at least one of the contexts does not include the child (e.g., the relation between the home and the parents’ workplace). The fourth system is the macrosystem, which includes all of the patterns of the micro-, meso-, and exosystems. The fifth and final system is the chronosystem,

which includes change or consistency over time in the developing child and the environment or place of residence.

These ecological systems represent a complex nested-system of interactions, and relationships in which SEL skills develop. Bronfenbrenner (1994) proposed that the growing child constantly interacts with these ecological systems. Although the development of SEL skills is influenced by multiple contexts, the focus of this study was the immediate environment of the school, which is the microsystem.

Microsystems. As previously mentioned, a microsystem consists of settings such as family, school, peer group, and workplace along with the pattern of activities, social roles, and relationships experienced by the developing child. Schools are dynamic systems comprised of administrators, teachers, school staff, students, parents, and the relationships among them (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004). Thus, the elementary school in this study was conceptualized as a complex, dynamic and interconnected system that included the characteristics of teachers, administrators, school staff, students, and the relationships between them. To visualize this conceptual model, the school as a microsystem, is the unit of study. In order to begin the process of effectively promoting SEL, one would expect schools to perform tasks related to selecting an evidence-based SEL program or strategies, such as through guidance from school leadership or a school leadership team. The nucleus of the school is the classroom, which functions as a microsystem within a microsystem comprised of the teacher and the students. Within the classroom as a system are processes by which the development of students' SEL skills occurs. Research has shown that the quality of student-teacher interactions and instructional practices are predictors of student academic performance and SEL skills (Parker, 2013). The classroom setting provided an opportunity to observe interactions between teachers

and students as well as interactions between students by listening to and recording notes on both spoken language and nonverbal communications.

An ecological perspective views effective interactions as interactions that occur consistently over extended periods of time. These extended or “enduring forms of interaction” are known as proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 38). In other words, proximal processes are progressively complex reciprocal interactions between a person and his or her environment, which “must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time” (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 620). Based on whether the interaction is positive or negative, proximal processes can impede or nurture the positive development of students. Observing interactions during classroom procedures, routines, schedules, management, and class rules provide opportunities for analysis, especially of teacher behaviors. One would expect to see calm and positive teachers who model SEL skills for students and treat all students, including the students with the most challenging behaviors, with care and warmth (Jones et al., 2013). In classrooms, SEL is explicitly taught and integrated throughout a school’s curriculum, such as when students are taught how to apply problem-solving steps to a character’s conflicts in a story, or when collaboration and conflict resolution are taught, modeled, and reinforced in cooperative group work (Elias, 2010). Although SEL skills are not explicitly stated in current college and career standards, many of the standards provide teachers with opportunities to integrate SEL skills with emotions, communications, and relationships into the language arts curriculum. For example, an expectation for an ELA college and career readiness standard for third grade is to “describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events” (National Governors Association Center for Best

Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 12). In order to meet the expectations of this standard, students need to have developed an emotion vocabulary.

Besides teachers and students, the entire school setting and its members (e.g., school administrators and school staff) can maximize the school environment and sustainability of SEL by promoting school-wide practices. This is often observed when school administration, teachers, and school staff adopt a supportive school climate by using a shared language and SEL processes to reinforce students' use of SEL skills as well as create organizational processes, structures and routines to facilitate SEL (Elias, 2010). In addition, school-wide SEL practices should “coherently connect and extend activities and approaches in the micro-contexts (e.g., classroom, playground, library) within the larger educational context” (Oberle et al., 2016, p. 7). Therefore, several micro-contexts within the school such as the playground, the lunchroom, and the school hallways were examined by using similar observations and documentation as in the classroom. These micro-contexts were important settings for understanding the integration of school-wide SEL programming into the school's daily interactions and practices because students are more likely to benefit when attention to SEL skills is included in places outside of classrooms with continuous and intentional monitoring of student behavior (Weissberg et al., 2015).

Proximal processes. As previously stated, in order for daily school practices and interactions to be effective, one would expect to observe practices and interactions that support the development of children's SEL skills on a regular basis as well as extended over a period of time. Bronfenbrenner (1995) “defined these enduring forms of interactions in the immediate environment as proximal processes” (p. 621). Students encounter many proximal processes throughout the school day such as teacher-child interactions; instructional quality; engaging and

appropriate instruction; opportunities for problem-solving; systematic use of feedback on performance to guide instruction; opportunities and support for peer relationships and friendship; and school rules and classroom management in which behavioral expectations are clearly stated and reinforced. However, according to Bronfenbrenner (1994), the ability of “proximal processes to produce and sustain development depends on the content and the structure of the microsystem” (p. 39). An important characteristic of these interactions is bi-directionality. Just as students are influenced by relationships and interactions in the environment, students also influence their immediate environment. Proximal processes were observed across school contexts such as hallways, the playground areas, lunchrooms, and the classroom. Processes that were explored included observations of the relationships and interactions between students and staff and among students. For example, one might observe students using negotiation procedures in areas outside the classroom, school staff interacting with students in positive ways by validating students’ emotional experiences, and structures and routines such as morning meetings and games that are consistently used throughout the school day. School staff might also adopt more positive discipline practices as opposed to punitive ones to facilitate SEL. In addition, documents such as the school’s mission, vision, and core values, school discipline plan, discipline referrals, school attendance records, and schedules were examined for systemic alignment with the school’s approach to SEL as well as to understand the norms, beliefs, and practices of a school. Interviews with school administrators and focus groups with classroom teachers and staff further clarified how a particular elementary school integrated SEL skills to create the conditions for students to succeed and also provided participants an opportunity to describe their perceptions of the influence of the school’s approach to SEL. Although the focus of this study was on the school context, this study acknowledged the role of building partnerships

with families (CASEL, 2013) and the community as well as district, state, and federal influences on the school from an ecological perspective and as a critical component in supporting and developing students SEL skills. These aspects of the ecological model were described if came into direct interaction within the school environment and as they applied to answering the research question.

Literature Review

The increase in the use of social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in schools has led to the emergence of a growing body of empirical research. This literature review includes relevant literature on SEL in schools and is organized into two sections. The first section provides a brief historical overview of past school reform efforts and educational goals in relation to SEL. Section two illustrates SEL efforts in schools with a focus on school-wide SEL approaches. The literature review concludes with a summary outlining implications in regards to this study.

Historical Perspective: School Reform, Goals, and Social and Emotional Learning

School reform is not new to the educational arena. The history of American schools is a rich narrative of various school reform efforts (Pearce, Beck, Copa, & Pease, 1992). “The idea that education, in itself, has the power to create fundamental change both for individuals and for society at large” has consistently served as the basis for school reform throughout the history of American education (Iorio & Yeager, 2011, p. 2). Hence, school reform is highly regarded as a way to improve society (Counts, 1932). Historically, in order to meet the needs of society, it was critical for reformers to identify and establish goals for education. These goals were often influenced by constant changes in ecological factors, such as economics, social, political, religious, and global competition, which fueled the need for American citizens to be able to

compete globally. Consequently, as American society changed, the goals of education also changed. In essence, the underlying assumption for school reform is: “reform schools and you reform society” (Parker, 1986, p. 2).

Schools are viewed as essential to an American way of life and survival as a democracy (Laud, 2001). Although “classrooms and schools are dynamic, interconnected systems comprising characteristics of teachers, administrators, school staff, students, and the relationships among them” (Jones & Bouffard, 2012, p. 10), schools interact with and are influenced by their environment, such as the school district, local, state, and federal governments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Historically, the goals of education for schools included SEL and its related skills, such as civic, moral, and character development. Throughout American history and still today, educators, parents, students, and the public, have supported a comprehensive set of goals for schools that include not only educating students “to be knowledgeable,” but also enhancing students’ social and emotional competence, character, health, and civic engagement (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 466; Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). However, recent school reform and accountability pressures from federal, state, and local levels seem to have shifted the teaching of broad curricular goals in schools into the teaching of a narrow curriculum (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). Therefore, in order to understand the challenges that schools face with implementing SEL, a historical perspective focused on the goals of education in relation to past and present school reform efforts is necessary. First, an overview of past school reforms and educational goals is presented and then followed by a discussion of current school reform efforts and its impact on educational goals. In addition, examples of some of the major school reforms are interspersed throughout this section to support a deeper understanding of each historical period and the goals of education. Next, current federal, state, and local policies provide efforts

to advance SEL in the midst of school reform. This section concludes with closing thoughts and implications for current school reform efforts.

School Reforms Prior to 1945

Past school reforms were mostly characterized by the belief that schools played a more important role in society than focusing education on reading and mathematics solely (Laud, 2001). School reform, during colonial times and up until the late nineteenth century, were predominantly motivated by political and moral goals (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). Although academic skills were important, protecting and nurturing a new democracy was the central focus. Therefore, basic skills such as reading were taught, “to teach good political judgment, allow learning from prior generations’ mistakes and successes, and inculcate honesty, integrity, and compassion” (Rothstein, Jacobsen, & Wilder, 2009, p. 14). Despite the fact that school reform goals up until the nineteenth century were mostly driven by political and moral goals, there were differences in the manner in which these goals should be accomplished during various school reform movements. For example, during Colonial New England, the reform goal, focused largely on salvation, required that all young children learn to read in order to understand the Bible. The purpose was to prepare learners for personal salvation and to transmit moral values (Parker, 1986). Thus, the Protestant church and religious beliefs influenced schools and textbooks (Laud, 2001).

However, during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, leaders such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson argued for a more practical education. Franklin suggested the use of stories, whereas Jefferson argued for building children’s sense of morality through a reasoning centered approach (Laud, 2001), which can be strongly connected to later initiatives addressing social and emotional development in students. Many of today’s SEL programs and

character education programs are based on Franklin's use of stories to impart moral knowledge while Jefferson's support for community service to build responsible citizenship laid the groundwork for service education programs.

Some of the challenges that schools face today were echoed during the nineteenth century. In 1787, the passage of the Northwest Ordinance Act continued the endorsement of religious and moral goals; however, the act also represented the first endorsement of knowledge as an educational goal, which constituted a "shift in the school's mission" (Laud, 2001, p. 3). The Northwest Ordinance Act established civic, moral, and academic purposes for education by declaring that "religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education, shall forever be encouraged" (Northwest Ordinance, 1787, p. 6). Thus, with the educational goal of knowledge and the political goal of having a literate electorate gaining in importance, debates were sparked over equal education for poor children during the 1800s. Although approximately 55% of children were enrolled in schools in the United States in 1830 (Nagdy & Roser, 2016), Pennsylvania had the most students in the country who were not receiving education with at least 250,000 children out of 400,000 children who were not in school (Commons et al., 1935). In Pennsylvania's urban public schools, poor children were deemed as receiving instruction only on basic skills as opposed to their affluent counterparts who received an education focused on broader goals that included citizenship, moral, and character education. In 1830, a report by a workingmen's committee condemned the schools and declared, "there can be no real liberty without a wide diffusion of real intelligence" (as cited in Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006, p. 6). In addition, debates sparked over the purpose of education. One prominent leader, Horace Mann, supported universal public schools and "argued that education should serve as a means of social mobility"

(Laud, 2001, p. 4). Hence, the most significant movement of the nineteenth century, the common school movement led by Horace Mann, “offered unity to sustain American culture, perpetuate representative government, promote free enterprise, and instill morality by allowing everyone to attend school” (Parker, 1986, p. 5). Although knowledge, as opposed to simply moral and civic values, began to take importance in American education during the nineteenth century, Mann argued that a democratic society could not function on academics alone; rather, democratic moral and political values should also be instilled.

In 1893, the Committee of Ten Report caused much controversy because of its belief that all students should be taught the same narrow academic college preparatory curriculum, which would prepare them for college and work (Kliebard, 2004). However, with the expansion of enrollment in high schools, many students were considered to be incapable of mastering a traditional academic curriculum (Pearce et al., 1992). Yet, the report of the Committee of Ten recommended that the purpose of high school is to prepare all students for college and life. In contrast, it was twenty years later when the Cardinal Principles Report maintained that academic skills alone were insufficient and recommended that high schools should prepare the academically bright students for entrance into higher education; (Parker, 1986; Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). The report proposed a comprehensive high school model through differentiated programs “as well as academic preparation for some students, vocational training and courses on family life, good health, citizenship, ethical character, and the worthy use of leisure” (Kirst & Usdan, 2009, p. 7). In addition, intelligence tests were used as a means to sort students into the appropriate academic track. This reform was viewed as necessary in order to meet the needs of the large enrollment of students and a society that was rapidly changing through industrialization, immigration, and urbanization.

Unlike the earlier report by the Committee of Ten, the Cardinal Principles received high approval and were implemented in K-12 curriculum (Kliebard, 2004). For example, the K-12 curriculum was realigned to the intellectual level and the destination of the students. The curriculum was mostly directed toward vocational education and the creation of the junior high school was widely accepted as a way to separate preadolescents from older adolescents. Overall, the Committee of Ten Report and the Cardinal Principles illustrated the constant challenges inherent in American education to specify and achieve consensus on educational goals. John Dewey offered an interesting perspective on the dilemma of specifying educational goals. According to Dewey, educational goals “come in conflict with one another” (Dewey, 1917, p. 123); however, integrating these goals is the only way to ensure compatibility. Subsequently, with each school reform, shaped by various ecological factors of their particular time period, several differences of thought on the goals of education existed. However, SEL and its related skills (i.e., moral, character, and civic education) remained a critical part of ensuring an education that would allow citizens to live and contribute to a democratic society during past school reforms.

School Reforms Post-1945

There were several triggering events in the twentieth century that changed the national perspective on the goals of education. During the late twentieth century, with the emergence of the Cold War in the 1950s, the Soviet Union’s launch of the satellite Sputnik in 1957 was perceived as a “global challenge from the Soviet Union” (Hughes & Byers, 2010, p. 3). This triggering event, motivated by an emphasis on national defense and technological superiority, marked the beginning of the federal government taking more steps in funding education (Pearce et al., 1992). As a result, emphasis was placed on mathematics, science, and foreign languages.

During the 1960s, it was the War on Poverty in which the expansion of the federal government's role in education led to the adoption of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965 to support students from low-income homes. However, school reform took a heightened sense of urgency on the national agenda with the release of the report, *A Nation at Risk*, (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which "set the tone for school reform" (Parker, 1986, p. 2) with accountability policies focused on improving academic achievement. *A Nation at Risk* offered a scathing account of American public education by declaring its mediocrity as a threat to the future of the United States. Although there were several instances in which warnings by testing experts were issued in regards to concentrating only on basic skills, a movement toward testing and accountability for schools became the norm (Rothstein, Jacobsen, & Wilder, 2008).

The No Child Left Behind Act. Subsequently, the most recent national legislation of ESEA, The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, was designed to narrow the achievement gap, which included the disparity in performance between different groups of students based on race or ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender. However, there were significant criticisms of the law's requirements for accountability (Baker et al., 2010; Becker & Luthar, 2002; Rothstein, Jacobsen, & Wilder, 2008). NCLB held schools accountable for students achieving proficient scores in reading and mathematics by the year 2014. The law mandated that schools report achievement for racial, ethnic, and economic subgroups, and issued sanctions based solely on mathematics and reading scores (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). These requirements for accountability placed increased pressure on schools to attain higher academic achievement for all students. Many opponents of NCLB have suggested that its focus on math and reading

achievement made it harder to support the development of students' social and emotional competence (Ravitch, 2010).

In spite of NCLB's intentions, many critics, including educators, also argued that NCLB had actually widened the achievement gap (Aber, Brown, Jones, Berg, & Torrente, 2011; Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2009). For example, according to a nationally representative survey of schools and districts, 62% of the districts indicated that time for English language arts (ELA) and/or mathematics in elementary schools was increased, which resulted in a 44% reduction in other areas of the curriculum such as SEL, science, art, social studies, physical education, music, and recess (McMurrer, 2007). Although this curricular shift is viewed as an unintended consequence of NCLB, many negative effects for schools and students were cited, such as a reduction in engaging and motivating learning opportunities for students, a decline in physical activity among young students, and teacher attrition and demoralization (Baker et al., 2010; Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). These negative effects were even more pronounced in urban schools that primarily served students with disadvantages and showed greater increases of time in reading and mathematics instruction (Dee & Jacob, 2010). Urban schools' reactions to NCLB were attributed to widening the achievement gap in social responsibility and other curricular areas because under NCLB, schools were not accountable for them (McMurrer, 2007, 2008). In addition to curricular shifts, schools and teachers were pressured by the demands of high-stakes testing and tended to do more test prep or "teaching to the test" (Roach, 2014, p. 1.)

Although recent meta-analyses and research syntheses have revealed that SEL could have positive academic, behavioral, and social and emotional outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Gabrieli et al., 2015), the narrow focus of school reform under NCLB, has been cited for limiting the ability of schools to address the social and emotional needs of all students. Yet, given the

challenges that schools face with educating an increasingly diverse community of learners, including a large number of students with mental health problems, the demands on schools to implement effective SEL approaches to prevent problem behaviors and promote positive student development have grown (Cooper & Cefai, 2009; Jones & Bouffard, 2012). As a result, there has been an increase in the number of schools that are adopting SEL programs, despite the pressure for increasing academic achievement (Dusenbury, Zadrazil, Mart, & Weissberg, 2011). These programs, however, are usually not connected to the mission of schools and almost never are they counted in official ratings of school performance (Schwartz, Hamilton, Stecher, & Steele, 2011). Hence, integration of SEL into schools' daily interactions and practices rarely happens (Becker & Domitrovich, 2011).

Nevertheless, there is a growing acknowledgment from federal, state, district, and school leaders that in order for students to have successful school and life outcomes, effective teaching and learning in schools should include meeting students' social and emotional needs (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). According to Yoder (2015) "this has created a need for strategies to integrate SEL practices into the learning environment and curriculum at the state, district, school, and student levels" (p. 3). Effective SEL policies and practices that should be integrated in state and district contexts include "SEL standards, guidelines that support SEL, accountability systems, and professional learning" (p. 3). Because this work has only been initiated in some states and districts, there is a need to expand by developing cross-state and district guidelines, standards, and policies as well as to relate these policies and practices to students at the school and classroom level (Dusenbury et al., 2015).

The Every Student Succeeds Act. In 2010, most states adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) with a focus on mathematics and reading to rigorously prepare students for

college, career, and beyond and to enhance the ability of the United States to compete globally (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Recently, there was a great pushback on testing from states, districts, teachers, parents, and politicians (Strauss, 2015). Although there was ample dissatisfaction with NCLB, the United States Congress did not develop an alternative law to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act until December 2015. The new law, the Every Student Succeeds Act, (ESSA) has eliminated the federal accountability testing measures of NCLB by giving states the responsibility to build their own accountability systems (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). As a result of a transition period between NCLB and ESSA, a full account of ESSA is still unfolding. However, SEL scholars viewed ESSA's requirement for states to adopt a nonacademic area to measure school performance as a possibility for expanding SEL in schools (Grant et al., 2017). Although some states are already testing students' social and emotional competence, proponents and SEL experts have warned against testing due to inadequate testing measures (Zernike, 2016). Nevertheless, while some states have mentioned SEL in their state ESSA plans, no state has selected SEL as its nonacademic measure for accountability (Woods & Scott, 2017). Consequently, clarifying educational goals will most likely continue to be a part of educational discourse as states work to implement the new law.

In summary, schools are dynamic, nested systems that are influenced by external social, political and economic forces. Undertaking a historical perspective on the goals of education and school reform has revealed that American education encompassed broader goals that instilled a deep sense of values and morals in students. These goals also fostered students' understanding of American culture and traditions in order to produce citizens who could contribute and sustain the American democratic society. As a result, learning basic skills was

viewed as only one part of a well-rounded education to enable citizens to perform well in society and to establish a high-functioning society. Hence, focusing on narrow curricular goals was viewed as a detriment to a free society. However, recent reforms such as NCLB's emphasis on increasing students' math and reading proficiency have greatly reduced time for other curricular goals including science, social studies, physical education, and SEL (Greenberg et al., 2003, Rothstein et al., 2008). Although it is widely believed that SEL can promote academic success (Durlak et al., 2011; Hanson, Dietsch, & Zheng, 2012; Sklad et al., 2012), emphasis still remains primarily on instructional fixes to produce academic outcomes.

However, an increase in the body of research supporting the development of students' social and emotional competence as vital for students' success in academics and life has helped to advance SEL. Research on the benefits and positive outcomes of SEL indicate that integrating SEL has the potential to increase academic achievement when implemented with fidelity and high quality as well as contribute to wellbeing (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). For this reason, national SEL organizations propose that the implication for current reform efforts, such as ESSA, is to utilize SEL as a comprehensive framework (CASEL, 2013; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Osher et al., 2016) in which all learning and services for students, such as after-school programs, counseling programs, and health programs, are a part of an integrated system for delivering a well-rounded and high-quality education to meet the needs of all students.

Current Social and Emotional Learning Practices in Schools

Over the last two decades there has been a growing interest in social and emotional learning (SEL) that has led to a rapidly expanding knowledge base (Oberle et al., 2016). Advancements in SEL research have confirmed that SEL programming can significantly improve students' academic achievement as well as predict and improve the likelihood that

students are successful in academic and career outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Gabrieli et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2017; Theodore, 2015). In order to increase the likelihood of receptivity by schools in an era of high-stakes accountability and to avoid competing demands on instructional time, SEL scholars advocated for rigorous randomized controlled studies to evaluate the efficacy of SEL programs as well as to measure and evaluate the impact of implementation fidelity and quality on outcomes (Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010). Consequently, a great number of SEL programs have also been developed along with over 500 research evaluations of these programs (Weissberg et al., 2015). These evaluations have mainly focused on classroom-based SEL programming, which have led to an understanding that only programs that are well designed and well implemented have the likelihood of producing desirable student outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011).

This increased adoption of SEL programs in schools has not been synonymous with high-quality implementation, which is necessary to achieve desirable academic, social and emotional outcomes (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Many schools often implement numerous social and behavioral programs for promotion, prevention, and intervention efforts. However, these programs sometimes lack comprehensiveness and coordination, resulting in a fragmented or piecemeal approach in which the probability of fostering and sustaining SEL is highly unlikely (Stoiber, 2011). Researchers, scholars, and national organizations have theorized that an integrated systemic school-wide SEL program or a whole-school approach is more effective for creating a supportive environment for fostering and sustaining SEL programming (CASEL, 2015; Oberle et al., 2016; Osher et al., 2016). Integrated systemic school-wide SEL programming embraces an ecological view (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994) with multiple contexts influencing SEL development. Thus, in order to enhance students' social, emotional and

academic skills, effective school-wide SEL programming occurs through coordinated strategies at the classroom and school levels as well as through students' families, and community strategies (Weissberg et al., 2015).

The purpose of this study was to examine an elementary school's strategies for integrating SEL into school-wide practices. Therefore, the goal of this section of the literature review is to synthesize current research of school-wide SEL practices in elementary schools as well as enhance understanding of the significance of this study. This literature review explores research studies on two approaches that are of interest to this study—integrated classroom-based programs and school-wide approaches. In addition, a continuum of SEL approaches that are designed to meet the needs of school context is provided as an alternative approach to traditional school-wide SEL programming.

Classroom-Based SEL Programs

A review of the research literature has identified two types of SEL programs in classrooms: classroom programs and multi-component programs (Durlak et al., 2011). Classroom programs usually have a specific curriculum or set of lesson plans that are taught only within the classroom setting. Multi-component programs add an additional component to classroom-based strategies, such as a school-wide component and a component involving parents to address school structures and practices to support positive student development. Past prevention and intervention efforts in social and emotional learning were not implemented as an integral part of academic instruction. Due to recent research that suggests the importance of effectively integrating academic and social and emotion learning (Durlak, et al., 2011), there is a greater emphasis now on developing and evaluating the impact of integrated approaches. These programs, developed to save instructional time and to promote implementation in schools, are

most often integrated into ELA, literacy or social studies. Currently, effective SEL research typically includes randomized controlled studies that are designed to evaluate improvements in academic outcomes and social-emotional competence as well as a process for measuring fidelity of implementation and quality. As previously mentioned, randomized controlled studies, especially of integrated SEL programs, were conducted to encourage schools to adopt SEL programs during an era of high-stakes testing (Brackett et al., 2010).

Classroom social and emotional learning programs. There are numerous examples of previous evaluation studies on SEL programs in classrooms. Although these evaluations have shown promising results, most of the evaluations consisted of quasi-experimental designs (Brackett, et al., 2010; Jones & Bouffard, 2012). For example, a quasi-experimental evaluation study was conducted to test the impact of a 30-week SEL curriculum, The Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating Approach [RULER] Feeling Words Curriculum (Brackett, et al., 2010). RULER is a product of emotional intelligence learning theory that is based on students' acquiring five interrelated emotional skills that include recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, and regulating emotion. It is designed for students in grades kindergarten to twelfth grade and provides professional development for teachers, administrators, school staff, district leaders, and parents. RULER has two short-term outcomes for students: individual emotional literacy skill development and enhanced emotional climate of classroom, school, and home. The more distal outcomes are academic competence, social competence, and psychological competence.

Brackett et al. (2010) used a pre- and post- text to compare fifth and sixth grade classrooms from three elementary schools. Although the results indicated that when compared to students who did not receive instruction in RULER, students who were instructed in RULER had

higher academic performance in English language arts (ELA), which the researchers used to support the preliminary effectiveness of RULER. The results of this study showed that RULER has a positive effect on students' academic and social outcomes; however, the results are preliminary because a randomized study was not employed (Brackett, et al., 2010). For example, in this evaluation study, schools were assigned to intervention groups and yet, analyses were conducted at the student level. In addition, preliminary effectiveness evaluation results suggest RULER has impact on student's academic and social and emotional outcomes. However, RULER is integrated in ELA by providing extensive writing experiences and opportunities for students to analyze, synthesize and evaluate their own feelings and the feelings of characters in literature. Although differences between students receiving RULER instruction and those who did not receive RULER are promising, these differences could be attributed to the students who received RULER having more opportunities with ELA skills.

Several experimental evaluations of classroom SEL programs have shown that evidence-based and highly implemented SEL programming can significantly boost students' academic success (Gabrieli et al., 2015; Hanson et al., 2012). For example, in a seminal study, Durlak and his colleagues conducted one of the first large-scale meta-analyses involving 270,034 kindergarten through twelfth grade students. The meta-analysis included both quasi-experimental and experimental evaluations of 213 universal school-based SEL programs (i.e. interventions that are appropriate for a general student body) that used a range of reliable and valid measures. The results of the meta-analysis revealed positive results for students who participated in school-based SEL programs when compared to students who did not experience SEL programming. For example, students who participated in SEL programs revealed significant improvements in social and emotional skills; attitudes about themselves, others, and

school; social and classroom behavior; conduct problems; and emotional distress, such as stress and depression. In addition, students participating in SEL programming “scored 11 percentile points higher on standardized tests, a significant improvement, relative to peers not receiving the program” (Durlak et al., 2011; SEL Research Group, 2010, p. 2; Theodore, 2015).

The Durlak et al. (2011) study contributes significantly to what is known about the impact and characteristics of effective SEL programming. Several characteristics of effective SEL programs were identified through this seminal study. In particular, a key finding from this study is that in order to improve SEL outcomes, programs must be both well designed and well implemented. Furthermore, the most effective SEL programs incorporate four elements represented by the acronym “SAFE—sequenced, active, focused, and explicit teaching” (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 6). Although these findings point to the benefits of SEL programming, Duncan et al. (2007) conducted a longitudinal study that pointed to attention skills rather than social skills predicting achievement outcomes. However, Duncan et al. (2007) also noted that social and emotional competence might predict other avenues of school success such as school adjustment, self-concept, motivation for learning, school engagement, and relationships with peers and teachers. A second key finding of Durlak et al. (2011) is that the school environment can positively influence students’ SEL. Durlak et al. (2011) found that systemic and environmental factors are important because of their ability to impact program outcomes. For example, Durlak and colleagues noted that improvements in the psychosocial environment of the schools influenced almost all of the positive student outcomes. Durlak and his colleagues also expressed the need for theory-driven research to help with accurate assessment of a variety of skills and with identifying how different skills are related. Noting the gap between research and practice,

Durlak and his colleagues affirmed that many schools are not implementing evidence-based prevention programs or have poor implementation.

In an extension of Durlak and colleagues' meta-analysis, Taylor et al. (2017) validated the positive outcomes of SEL by conducting a meta-analysis of 82 SEL programs. They also studied whether positive outcomes from SEL programs are sustained. These follow-up outcomes were conducted six to 18 years after students participated in the SEL programs. The findings revealed that students who participated in SEL programs had significant positive benefits for three and a half years following program participation and an average of 13 percentile points higher in academic achievement than students who did not participate. At subsequent follow-up periods, students continued to show significant positive outcomes and wellbeing. Because these findings demonstrated lasting decreases in negative behavior when compared to the control group, the researchers suggested that the SEL programs served as a safeguard against later negative behaviors. Other notable findings indicated that higher SEL competencies at the end of participation predicted long-term benefits. Additionally, follow-up conducted 18 years after participation demonstrated a 6% increase in high school graduation, an 11% increase in college graduation rates and the likelihood for students achieving positive trajectories in life. In consideration of the aforementioned findings, in order to improve students' academic, social and emotional outcomes, and life outcomes, SEL programs must be well designed and well implemented.

Multi-component programs. As previously mentioned, multi-component programs include a classroom program component in addition to a school-wide component and/or parent component. Another finding by Durlak et al. (2011) is that multi-component programs were no more effective than single-component programs. Durlak and his colleagues had predicted that

that multi-component programs would be more effective than single-component programs. However, the effects of the multi-component program were comparable to the single-component program, not significantly higher. The researchers suspected that this might be due to implementation problems because multi-component programs require careful planning and integration. In addition, there were few studies that compared the direct effects of classroom based programming to multi-component programming. Because of its ability to reach far beyond the classroom through school-wide practices, the design and implementation of multi-component programs was of interest to this study of integrated school-wide SEL practices.

4Rs program. A smaller number of studies have been conducted with multi-component programs that used randomized designs in classroom settings (e.g., Brown, Jones, LaRusso, & Aber, 2010; Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2011). In micro-contexts such as classrooms, one of the most important proximal processes involves relationships. These proximal processes, “an enduring set of interactions characterized by regular and consistent patterns,” have the power to produce and sustain positive student development depending on the content and structure of the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 38–39). Therefore, the Reading, Writing, Respect, & Resolution (4Rs) Program longitudinal study was selected because it highlights changes in classroom-level processes that improve the quality of the classroom, which are the quality of interactions among teachers and students and the emotional, instructional, and organizational aspects of classroom experiences (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

The 4Rs SEL Program is a literacy-based curriculum for students in grades kindergarten to eighth grade that includes lessons on conflict resolution, cultural differences, and cooperation. Teachers use high-quality children’s literature to facilitate students’ understanding and acquisition of skills in handling anger, listening, assertiveness, cooperation, negotiation,

mediation, and building community. In addition, 4Rs promote change processes at multiple levels such as the students, their interactions, and classroom and school environments.

Researchers conducted a three-year longitudinal randomized study to evaluate the 4Rs Program by using theory-driven research to predict change processes at multiple levels, such as the individual, the classroom, and the school environment. Accordingly, Durlak et al. (2011) expressed the need for theory-driven research to help with accurate assessment of a variety of skills as well as to help with identifying how different skills are related. The 4Rs studies, conducted in 18 northeastern urban public schools with 82 third-grade teachers and 82 classrooms, provide insight into classroom processes and teacher-student interactions. Twenty-four schools were recruited for the study; however, only 18 schools were in the final sample. Although child-level data was not specifically reported, data was reported as being typical for northeastern urban public schools. The population of teachers was mostly female (94%) with 51% White, 27% Black, 20% Hispanic, and 2% from other groups, such as Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American.

At the end of one year, Brown et al. (2010) utilized a cluster randomized controlled design to examine the impacts of the 4Rs Program and teacher social-emotional functioning on the quality of third grade classrooms. Brown et al. (2010) controlled for teacher social-emotional functioning in order to examine the impact of 4Rs as an SEL and literacy intervention on the quality of classroom processes and to determine whether the impact was influenced by teacher social-emotional functioning. A pairwise matching procedure was employed prior to randomization. Pairwise matching consisted of using an algorithm for computation of distance between schools and 20 dimensions of demographics and school characteristics related to the study (Brown et al., 2010). Randomized assignments of schools were accomplished through a

MATLAB uniform random numbers generator. A comparison of the groups across the 20 dimensions of demographics and school characteristics ensured that the two groups did not differ significantly. Because of the success with the matching and random assignment procedure, the researchers were confident in the internal validity of the study.

Independent, trained classroom observers conducted classroom observations using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), a standardized observation protocol that assesses classroom climate by rating teaching behaviors and teacher-child interactions according to three dimensions: instructional, organizational, and emotional classroom processes. At the end of one school year, findings indicated that the 4Rs Program was rated as significantly higher quality on the social and emotional climate of the classrooms when compared to the control schools. Higher quality ratings of the 4Rs classrooms reflected the degree to which teachers and students' interactions were warm and supportive, lacked anger and hostility, and included consistent teacher responses to the needs of students as well as teachers integrating students' ideas and interests into learning activities.

Post hoc analyses indicated a significant effect by 4Rs on classroom emotional support and classroom instructional support; however, significant intervention effects were not found in classroom organization, which measures behavior management. Although the 4Rs Program focuses on behavior management (e.g., effectively monitoring and preventing disruptive behavior), the program focuses less explicitly on the other two subscales of the classroom organization (i.e., productivity, and learning formats), which could explain these results. In comparison, Raver et al. (2008), using similar methods with studying 4Rs found similar results; however, there were significant intervention effects in classroom organization. In contrast, the 4Rs Program did not impact classroom organization, which could be because Raver and

colleagues specifically focused on providing behavior management training to teachers.

However, Raver and colleagues did not test other domains of classroom organization such as productivity and learning formats.

Although the first year of Brown et al. (2010) 4Rs study cites several limitations, these limitations were cited as opportunities for future research to advance SEL efforts. A particular limitation noted was that the design of the evaluation did not allow the researchers to have the ability to specify which components or combinations of components of 4Rs were related to classroom quality. This kind of information could provide schools with more guidance on implementing SEL programs. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that this study pointed to strong empirical evidence that professional development for teachers and support in the delivery of an integrated SEL program can positively affect classroom-level social processes associated with emotional and instructionally supportive environments. High-quality teacher-student interactions are important for a supportive classroom environment because high-quality relationships produce higher student academic achievement and SEL competence, while poor teacher-student interactions are connected to low academic achievement (Baker, 2006; Ladd & Burgess, 2001, Thapa, Cohen, Higgins, & Guffey, 2012; Theodore, 2015).

After two years of the 4Rs study, Jones et al. (2011) found that students in the intervention schools self-reported fewer acts of aggression with peers and a reduction in depression. Teachers also reported less acts of aggression, improved attention skills, and overall more socially competent students. In addition, the researchers noted that students who were at the highest risk achieved the highest developmental outcomes. Jones and colleagues also provided some insight on change at the individual student-level and at the classroom-level. In particular, it was noted that small or modest changes may appear early in some domains while larger and

more significant changes occurred in more domains across more levels at a later time. The 4Rs study illustrates that changing settings, such as classrooms, through practices, routines, and climate is possible and sustainable.

Responsive classroom. Several efficacy trials of Responsive Classroom (RC), a multi-component SEL program that provides developmentally appropriate, student-centered discipline, have validated its effectiveness with students, especially those who are disadvantaged. RC has been associated with improving several outcomes, such as social and emotional, literacy and mathematics (Rimm-Kaufman, Fan, Chiu, & You, 2007; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014). In a recent mixed-methods study, Anyon (2016) examined contextual influences on implementation of RC in a diverse urban K-8 school. Three fundamental practices of RC were selected for implementation, which included *morning meeting* (class meetings consisting of integrated community-building activities with academics), *teacher language* (utilizing questioning, interactive modeling, specific praise of acceptable behavior) and *logical consequences* (positive student-centered discipline practices). Using Durlak and Dupre's (2008) Implementation Framework, the contextual influences on implementation of RC in the K-8 school were organized into three categories: "(1) characteristics of the intervention in terms of compatibility and adaptability, (2) organizational capacity such as a shared vision and ability to integrate the program into existing structures, and (3) aspects of the intervention support system like training and technical assistance" (Anyon, 2016, p. 4). The findings revealed that RC was not compatible with the school's mission and values, which reduced implementation and fidelity. The school experienced challenges with the philosophy of RC and its approach to discipline, and an overall lack of buy-in from administrators and teachers.

This study suggests the need for intervention support that provides technical assistance

and training to assist school staff with aligning RC with the philosophical beliefs. Based on these findings, Anyon (2016) recommended that school counselors take the role of collaborating with school staff in order to attend to factors that inhibit successful implementation. Although there is research support for integrating these programs and student services into a comprehensive, whole-school approach, there is still limited consensus on the best ways to integrate school-wide SEL programming into the daily practices of schools. In addition, while research has achieved successful outcomes, there is difficulty translating research efforts into effective practice in schools. Identifying specific SEL components or combinations of components that produce a desired outcome could help provide more guidance to schools when selecting and integrating SEL programs.

School-wide Social and Emotional Learning Practices

School-wide SEL integrates SEL into all contexts of the school environment through the daily practices and interactions of administrators, school staff, teachers, and students (CASEL, 2015). A review of the literature on school-wide SEL practices and strategies revealed that there is also a strong international interest in school-wide SEL programming as an international strategy known as Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) (Torrente, Alimchandani, & Aber, 2015). For example, in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia, SEAL is designated as a whole school approach that is designed to promote social, emotional, mental, and behavioral skills.

Although research studies on SEAL in elementary schools is limited, there are currently several examples of qualitative and quantitative studies that provide analysis of SEAL practices and strategies in British and Australian elementary schools (Freeman, Wertheim, & Trinder, 2014; Hall, 2010). These studies were not included because they were not appropriate because

school contexts in the United States are different. In the United States, research studies on school-wide SEL practices and strategies in elementary schools are also limited; however, there are several examples of qualitative studies at the secondary level that include a detailed account of school-wide SEL practices and strategies in urban high schools (Hamedani & Darling-Hammond, 2015). The authors of these studies stated that high schools were selected as the unit of study because there is an abundance of evaluation studies conducted in elementary school settings (Hamedani et al., 2015). The studies of high schools are not included in this literature review because the context and strategies varied greatly from an elementary school setting. However, there are several recent research studies of school-wide SEL programming in elementary schools that are of particular interest to this study. For example, several studies focused on utilizing comprehensive organizational frameworks or school-wide systems known as multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) for effective and efficient delivery of school-wide SEL programming. There was also an emerging study that illustrates school-wide SEL programming through routines and strategies. This study is included because it offers a different comprehensive approach to integrating SEL into the school environment. In addition, there were also a few studies of non-classroom settings that are included in this literature review because they align to the systemic approach and the analysis of school micro-contexts beyond the classroom.

Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) and social and emotional learning. Schools are challenged with educating an increasingly diverse student population with varied abilities, motivation, and SEL skills. In order to meet the needs of all students, a multi-tiered system of support to address students' social and emotional development is viewed as a viable method to facilitate prevention and intervention services (Osher et al., 2007). MTSS is an integrated,

comprehensive framework for academic, socio-emotional and behavioral success (Lane, Menzies, Ennis, & Bezdek, 2013). Ample research has noted that high-quality implementation of MTSS can significantly improve student outcomes. For example, a 2014 state-wide evaluation of Kansas MTSS reported that schools with high-quality implementation of MTSS showed improvement in social, emotional and academic outcomes, such as significant student academic outcomes, improvements in instruction and school functioning as well as increased collaboration among teachers to analyze and review student data in order to gain an awareness of how to meet students' needs (WestEd, 2015).

Because studies have shown minimal student outcomes when SEL prevention and intervention services are separated from the structure and mission of schools, numerous researchers and mental health professionals are calling for schools to utilize MTSS as a framework for efficiently and effectively aligning school mental health goals with educational goals and delivering support through a continuum of services (Capella, Jackson, Bilal, Hamre, Soule, 2011). Given that students spend a large portion of their time in school, schools are a natural setting for promoting students' social and emotional competence (Hull, 2011). Although there is great support for integrating prevention and intervention services, there is little agreement on the best ways to integrate services to achieve desirable student outcomes (Atkins, Hoagwood, Kutash, & Seidman, 2010). A major challenge for integrating services is that many SEL programs have different theoretical frameworks that target different student outcomes and may emphasize different components (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). These SEL programs are operated as stand-alone approaches in schools to target various student outcomes, such as bullying, substance abuse, behavior, etc. The result is a rather fragmented approach that has little effect on promoting the social, emotional, and academic success of students (Stoiber, 2011).

However, several recent studies of integrated models that involve combining interventions and theoretical frameworks of SEL programs could potentially offer a more promising comprehensive approach to help schools with integrating school-wide SEL programming.

Stand-alone approaches combined with MTSS. The use of MTSS in schools is based on a public health model (Bell, 2014) in which Tier I support encompasses universal SEL programming that is delivered to all students in order to prevent problem behaviors and promote social and emotional competence and academic success. Tier II support consists of students who receive intervention for mild to moderate dysfunction; Tier III support provides intensive intervention services for severe behavior issues (as cited in Theodore, 2015). The three tiers function interdependently to “prevent, reverse, and minimize mental health problems while promoting social-emotional, and academic success among all individuals in a school,” which provides schools with more time to engage students in high-quality and meaningful interactions and instructional experiences (Cook et al., 2015, p. 167; Osher et al., 2007; Strein, Hoagwood, & Cohn, 2003). Rather than isolated stand-alone prevention programs in an uncoordinated fashion, Domitrovich et al. (2010) advocate for an integrated model of prevention as a way to incorporate programs or strategies into one comprehensive approach. Domitrovich and colleagues define integrated models as the seamless blend of multiple strategies or programs into one coherent program. Stand-alone SEL programs can be combined within tier levels or “horizontal integration” and programs can be combined through “vertical integration” in which prevention and intervention services are coordinated across tiers (Domitrovich et al., 2010, p. 74).

Although few studies have examined this kind of an integrated approach, a promising body of research that illustrates systemic school-wide SEL programming, in which SEL programs are combined to facilitate coordination of classroom and school strategies, is emerging.

In particular, Albrecht, Mathur, Jones, & Alazemi (2015) conducted a study of a vertical integrated model approach in which prevention and intervention services were coordinated across tiers in three elementary schools in the Midwest. Albrecht et al., (2010) measured the effectiveness of a school-wide three-tiered program in reducing students' disciplinary referrals as well as in increasing academic achievement and attendance. The study evaluated the implementation of a coordinated MTSS program through the Social Skills Training and Aggression Reduction Techniques Program (START^{Plus}), which also included components that could be used at each tier. Data collection measures included office discipline referrals, attendance, and state-wide proficiency tests. The results of this study indicated that the schools had significant reductions in disruptive behavior. However, there were mixed results in academic performance with some schools showing improvement while others schools' academic performance decreased or stayed the same. Although this study had several strengths, such as non-punitive disciplinary practices and the use of all school staff and a school leadership team, including the school social worker, principal and a Tier 3 facilitator, there were critical areas of weaknesses. For example, teachers received training, but did not receive ongoing support, which is critical for high-quality implementation and increased positive outcomes. In a study exploring the association of utilizing coaching strategies with teachers and the impact on implementation, Becker et al. (2013) found that coaching was correlated to better implementation quality. Additionally, progress monitoring, which could have assisted with measuring implementation fidelity and students' progress, was inconsistent. Although progress-monitoring assessments are critical for accurately measuring and evaluating student performance, which can help schools make data-driven decisions to improve student outcomes, progress monitoring is often an inconsistent aspect of implementing MTSS in schools. For example, Becker and Domitrovich

(2010) found many inconsistencies with schools collecting progress monitoring data in isolation of services and rarely using progress-monitoring data to measure students' progress when implementing interventions. Accordingly, data on fidelity in Albrecht and colleagues' study of a vertical model approach in a Midwestern elementary school was not effectively accomplished in order to further examine outcomes.

In contrast to Albrecht and colleagues' study, Cook et al. (2015) utilized a horizontal approach by combining two evidence-based approaches, Positive Behavior Interventions Support (PBIS) and an SEL program, to conduct a matched quasi-experimental study in two large elementary schools in the southeast region of the United States. The population of the two schools consisted of a high proportion of students on free and reduced lunch. In addition to the district administrator selecting the school sites, the elementary principals selected eight fourth and fifth grade classrooms to participate in this study. The purpose of the study, which is of particular interest to school-wide SEL programming, was to examine whether the combined effects of PBIS and SEL can provide a more beneficial foundation to integrate into a MTSS framework. Although PBIS and SEL are prevalent and widespread, they are based on two different philosophical thoughts. According to Osher et al., (2010), PBIS is more teacher-centered using extrinsic rules and positive reinforcement to manage and prevent problem behaviors. On the other hand, SEL uses more student-centered approaches by teaching students to "regulate their own actions toward self and others" (Cook et al., 2015, p. 169). The findings revealed that combining PBIS and SEL produced greater improvements in social and emotional outcomes and reducing problem behaviors than PBIS or SEL alone. However, it is also important to note that PBIS and SEL alone also produced significant results. Cook and his colleagues' findings suggest that combining PBIS with an SEL curricula could be very beneficial

for implementing an MTSS framework. Although this study shows promise for a school-wide SEL approach, a larger sample under randomized controlled conditions is necessary to advance integrated models.

Continuum of approaches. As previously mentioned, there is little consensus in the SEL research community on the best ways to integrate SEL services into schools. Jones and Bouffard (2012) argue that a one-size fits all approach is not beneficial to schools because a school's context and needs may vary. Instead, Jones and Bouffard (2012) advocate for more effective and efficient interventions through a continuum of approaches that could include SEL programs and specific SEL strategies, such as daily routines and structures, school-wide efforts to promote positive school culture and climate, and differentiated support through a multi-tiered approach. Capella et al, (2011) reveal that contextualizing SEL programs can result in high-quality implementation and fidelity and better positive outcomes; however, adaptations may only be appropriate for the school in which the adaptations were made. In addition, several studies have cited that school context matters (Anyon, 2016; Thapa et al., 2012). Utilizing a continuum of approaches would enable schools to tailor their own integrated SEL approach based on their needs and context.

Although this approach may seem promising, schools' adapting a continuum of approaches would require knowing the active ingredients of different SEL programs that are necessary to produce the desired outcomes. There has been little research on the most salient features of SEL programs (Weissberg et al., 2015). However, recently, Jones and her colleagues have formed partnerships with schools to design and test 12 to 15 promising strategies or ingredients from SEL programs that may produce significant effects in prevention efforts (Jones, Bailey, Brush, & Kahn, 2017; Matte, 2015). Based on the work of Embry and Biglan (2008),

these active ingredients are known as kernels, which are defined as the “fundamental units of behavioral influence that underlie effective prevention and treatment” (p. 75) that can produce significant effects in prevention efforts. The study of kernels is promising; however, a solid research base is needed to test the efficacy of this approach and how to guide schools with utilizing this approach to integrate SEL.

Few studies have examined the effects of targeting non-classroom settings or school micro-contexts other than classrooms. Johnson, Johnson, and Dudley’s (1992) study of elementary students after they received peer-mediation training found that after 4 months students in third through sixth grade were observed using negotiation procedures in the hallways, the lunchroom, the playground, and the gymnasium. Cash, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2014) conducted observations of school micro-contexts in 37 elementary schools to assess the impact of school-based interventions in non-classroom settings, such as hallways or the cafeteria. Cash et al. (2014) found that within schools, rates of violent acts varied by location with areas of high student density experiencing significantly higher rates of rule violations, which suggested a need for schools to increase supervision and prevention strategies according to location and times of increased student density in non-classroom settings.

To a greater extent than Cash and her colleagues’ study of non-classroom settings, an earlier study by Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin’s (1998) is similar to this study because of its systemic approach to examining observations of several non-classroom settings. Lewis et. al, (1998) sought to explore the impact of a social skills instruction program combined with direct intervention on problem behavior across three specific school settings: cafeteria, playground, and a hallway transition. The study was conducted as a part of a larger school-wide behavioral support system targeting proactive instructional-based interventions, multiple levels such as

school-wide, specific settings, classroom, and individual student level. An effective behavioral support (EBS) team comprised of some members of the school's staff was formed to develop the social skills program, train other staff, and implement proactive school discipline policies and procedures. The EBS team established school rules, taught the rules to students, and then initiated a token reinforcement system to increase compliance.

The results of the study indicated that educators were successful with reducing the amount of problem behavior across each targeted setting. The data also showed that educators could develop and implement instructional strategies with successful outcomes to meet the needs of their school. Although the non-classroom observations for this study are similar to this study, Lewis and colleagues focused on building a system of effective behavioral support. This study sought to understand how an elementary school integrated SEL into its daily school practices to promote the development of students' social and emotional competence. Although the school-wide social skills program that was developed in the Lewis and colleagues' study lacked the explicit teaching and integration of SEL competencies (CASEL, 2013) necessary for students to develop social and emotional competence, the findings support this study because it validates a systemic approach to targeting interventions within schools.

Conclusion

Research has shown that evidence-based SEL programs can increase academic, behavioral, and career outcomes (Gabrieli et al., 2015). Schools are using SEL programs as well as many other packaged curricula to provide prevention and intervention services, which has created a rather fragmented approach to the delivery of services and has challenged the ability of schools to integrate SEL and produce positive student outcomes. Although a review of the literature showed that there is great support for integrating school-wide SEL programming, there

is little agreement on the best ways (Capella et al., 2011). For example, studies that support the use of MTSS in integrated models in which SEL programs can be horizontally or vertically integrated have provided some valuable insights. These studies showed promising results and some insight into school practices that are necessary to integrate school-wide SEL programming. These practices included collaboration with school mental health professionals to provide intervention services, assessments, progress monitoring, training, and on-going support. A recurrent theme in this review was that training and ongoing support through consultation and coaching is important for improving teacher-student interactions. Another important theme was the use of assessments for screening, diagnosing, and progressing monitoring to support schools' decisions about students' services and their ability to improve the delivery of services.

However, an important feature of the literature seems to focus on how to make tiered models flexible and adaptive to the context of schools. Although these studies illustrated several tiered approaches using integrated models, Capella et al. (2011) efforts in adapting SEL programs to schools' context reflects the challenge of finding the best ways to integrate SEL. Jones and Bouffard (2012) recognized that context matters and advocated for a continuum of approaches that include a variety of ways in which schools can integrate SEL based on their needs or context. Such a continuum would move beyond examining programs and include routines, strategies, and structures that are appropriate to the school's context. Research has just begun on the continuum of approaches. Hence, there are examples of integrated school-wide SEL programming, but far too little research and experimental studies to yield evidence-based practices that schools could adopt.

In contrast, the research studies that examined micro-contexts other than the classroom emphasized the importance of attending to school micro-contexts, but do not provide other

elements of school-wide SEL programming. While there is ample guidance for schools on the effectiveness of pre-existing SEL programs, there is a lack of evidence-based guidance on the best ways to integrate SEL into the daily interactions and regular practices of the school.

Because each school's context is different, research should focus on strategies and exploring which sequences or combinations of strategies work best or how schools can effectively design their own comprehensive program of prevention and interventions strategies and implement them well. This study explored how SEL is integrated into all settings in an elementary school. Exploring how schools can integrate SEL into daily interactions and regular school practices could assist educators with developing meaningful, sustained, and integrated approaches to SEL that create the conditions for students' success.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology that will be utilized for this study. The chapter is organized into several subsections describing the research plan and design. The purpose of this study was to examine how SEL is integrated into an elementary school's daily interactions and practices. A single instrumental qualitative case study was chosen as the best approach to answer the research question. The following description of the research design and plan was informed by Yin (2014) and Stake (1995).

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an inquiry process that involves an interpretative and naturalistic approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As an interpretative approach, qualitative research provides an avenue to understand and interpret the meanings that people attribute to social or human issues. As a naturalistic approach, qualitative research is conducive to studying phenomena in its natural setting. Since the purpose of this study was to examine how SEL is integrated into an elementary school's daily interactions and practices, a qualitative research approach was most appropriate. In addition, Creswell (2013) elaborates on when to use qualitative research, such as when one needs to explore a problem or issue; when there is a need to establish "a complex, detailed understanding of the issue" (p. 48); and when there is a need to understand the contexts or settings in which participants interact and deal with an issue or problem. Because schools and classrooms operate as complex systems (Jones & Bouffard, 2012), qualitative research in which the school context is considered in direct relationship to the participants (i.e., administrators, teachers, students, paraprofessionals, etc.) was a more viable method. As a result, this study explored the complex daily interactions and school practices that occurred in an elementary

school in places such as the playground, hallways, lunchroom, and classrooms. By paying particular attention to the meanings that participants bring and considering multiple perspectives, this study delivered a holistic account of the school's approach to integrated school-wide SEL practices.

Creswell (2013) also maintains that qualitative research is used when “quantitative measures and analyses simply do not fit the problem” (p. 48). Hence, another rationale for employing qualitative research focuses on the complexity of SEL and school context. In contrast to a better-defined field such as literacy instruction, where there is solid scientific knowledge for schools to guide teachers in how to effectively teach reading, there is little guidance for schools on the best ways to integrate SEL into daily interactions and school practices (Stoiber, 2011). In addition, the school context presents a challenge for quantitative measures because it is filled with many factors that are difficult to control. For example, a school may adopt a variety of SEL programs that are organized into a comprehensive approach to address the social and emotional needs of students. Consequently, isolating and measuring variables accurately and reliably would be challenging. Therefore, qualitative research, which situates the researcher into the context of the school, is more applicable to understanding SEL.

Rationale for Case Study Research

A case study was used to examine integrated SEL into a school's daily interactions and practices. The rationale for selecting case study research is supported by the in-depth writings of Merriam (2001), Yin (2003, 2014), and Stake (1995). According to Yin (2014), choosing case study research depends largely on the research question. If the research question predominantly seeks to explain “how” or “why” some social phenomenon works, the more that case study research will be relevant and “the more that your questions require an extensive and “in-depth”

description of some social phenomenon” (Yin, 2014, p. 4). The overarching research question that framed this study, “*How does an elementary school integrate school-wide SEL programming into its daily practices to support students social and emotional development?*” is aligned with the purposes of case study research because answering the research question will result in an in-depth understanding of the case, which could potentially illustrate promising practices that could be beneficial for other schools.

Yin (2003) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). This provided useful guidance for a study such as this because the integration of school-wide SEL practices in an elementary school represents a dynamic and complex interplay of multilayered contexts in which the boundaries between the phenomenon (i.e., the integration of school-wide SEL practices) and the context (i.e., an elementary school) are not necessarily be well-defined. As illustrated previously, school context matters in influencing and examining how SEL is integrated into daily interactions and school practice. Given this contextual relationship, multiple sources of evidence are a key characteristic of case study research that must be utilized in order to enhance credibility of the findings. This case study provided opportunities to collect multiple sources of information that were rich in context in order to examine how SEL is integrated into daily interactions and school practices within the real-life context of the school such as the playground, lunchroom, hallways and classrooms. Multiple sources of data collection included observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews, document analysis, and a reflexive journal. According to Stake (1995) case study research involves exploring a real-life case or multiple cases within a bounded system, which is a setting or context over time and place. Merriam

(2001) maintains that the “single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study; the case” (p. 27). The case is “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 27) in which the researcher is entrusted to completely understand and articulate. Case study research informed this study through intimate contact with daily school life and an in-depth exploration of an elementary school, utilizing contextual data to develop a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the findings.

Case Selection

The “case” for this study is defined as the elementary school selected for examination. An elementary school is the setting for this study because typically at the higher grades, such as middle and high schools, the focus is usually on subject matter rather than SEL (Hamedani et al., 2015). Selecting a school that was useful for participating in this study was paramount for answering the research question. Recommendations on elementary schools that are high performers in SEL were obtained from informants, such as district personnel, CEOs of charter schools, and other educational professionals. For the purposes of this study, the definition of a school that is high-performing in SEL (a) commits to making SEL a priority by creating a safe, supportive, and engaging environment that promotes SEL; (b) fully integrates SEL into daily school practices and interactions; (c) provides professional development and support; (d) coordinates SEL into academic instruction and existing programs, and connects and extend classroom learning into other school-micro-contexts (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Within the case, this study examined the school’s strategies to integrate SEL across micro-contexts within the school (e.g., classrooms, playgrounds, lunchrooms, hallways), which included the intentional interactions among teachers, administrators, school staff, and students and the practices designed to teach and reinforce students’ SEL skills. Additionally, the

reflections of school staff, including administrators and teachers, on the school's strategies for integrating SEL were included. Since several units or micro-contexts of the school were examined, this study used an embedded case study design (Yin, 2014). An embedded case study design is a single case study with multiple subunits. For example, even though this case study was about a single elementary school, a recursive analysis unfolded in which several subunits or contexts such as classrooms, playgrounds, lunchrooms, and hallways were examined and then, followed with a return to examining the school as a whole. Additionally, this study was characteristic of an instrumental study based on Stake's (1995) assertion that the use of case study to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern in which the case or cases is selected in order to understand the problem is an instrumental study.

Wolcott (as cited in Creswell, 2013) suggests that a single case study is best because a multiple case study limits the level of detail that can be provided. This study examined a single case because it facilitated an in-depth analysis of a school-wide effort to develop SEL across micro-contexts within the school. In many schools, the implementation quality of even stand-alone SEL programs has been limited, while the integration of SEL into daily interactions and practices is even more rare (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). This study was firmly grounded in an ecological approach, which views SEL skills as developing across school contexts. Therefore, the ecological model informed data collection and analysis processes.

Site Selection Criteria

Yin's (2014) case site selection criteria was used to identify an elementary school site for the study. The criteria were used to ensure that the site could fully answer the research questions. Key district personnel and educational professionals assisted with access to at least five possible sites. After gaining access to each site, observations of each school were conducted

using an innovation configuration map (Hord, Stiegelbauer, Hall, & George, 2006) (See Appendix A). An innovation configuration map (IC) is one of three diagnostic tools of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, which is a widely used researched-based tool that has been applied to a variety of educational settings (Hord et al., 2006). The IC map consisted of variations adapted from Devaney et al., (2006) Practice Rubric for Schoolwide SEL Implementation with key school-wide SEL practices and the actions and behaviors that range from ideal, acceptable, to unacceptable based upon SEL research and the specific plan adopted by the elementary school. The IC was designed with scores ranging from one to five, with five correlating to the most ideal characteristics of school-wide integrated SEL practices. Examples of variations for key school-wide SEL practices on the IC focus on observing the degree to which the school was fully integrating school-wide SEL programming and the use of SEL strategies in interactions between students and adults.

Based on the scores on the IC, all schools that scored over a threshold of three out of five on the IC were included on a list of possible participants. There were two schools that scored over a threshold of three. A request for participation was initiated with both schools. A 30-minute structured interview (See Appendix B) with the principals of each school was conducted as an additional screening to facilitate the final selection of the school site. As a result of the interview, Taylor Elementary School was selected as meeting the criteria that would best answer the research questions.

Description of the Case

This study occurred at Taylor Elementary School, which is a public school that serves pre-kindergarten through grade 5 children in the Greater New Orleans Area. Taylor is a Title 1 school, receiving federal funds to implement evidence-based programs. This school was chosen

because it is local and a high-performer in SEL. During late August in 2005, the Greater New Orleans area experienced the major devastation of Hurricane Katrina. In light of the traumatic experiences of students and their families, several schools began to adopt SEL programs.

Taylor Elementary School is located on the West Bank of the Mississippi River and draws nearly 500 students from its surrounding areas. The school campus has been used as a high school and a junior high school. It currently has five buildings, including a three-story main building with historic designation. The other four buildings were added when the school was a junior high school. The four buildings include two that are designated for classrooms and a library along with the other two that are designated for the school gymnasium and cafeteria. The school's population of 459 students, included 246 males and 213 females. Representing a multi-ethnic mix of cultures and languages, Taylor has a diverse student body, including 20.7% Caucasian students, 9.2% Hispanic, and 64.3% African American. In addition, there were 4% Asian and 2% Native American students. Approximately 92% of students came from homes with low-incomes and 16% of the students have disabilities. The school housed 19 regular classes from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade along with seven special education classes and one bilingual class for Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Classroom teachers consisted of 85% Caucasian, 13% African American, and 3% Asian. Eighty-three percent of the teaching staff had taught for three or more years. Taylor's school administration included a principal and an assistant principal. In addition, the school is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In 2009, Taylor decided to implement school-wide SEL to support students with handling conflicts and establishing positive relationships. In particular, Taylor' staff provided students support with skills, such as support on as self-regulation, relationships, and problem-solving skills.

Description of Taylor’s Social and Emotional Learning Programs

The school integrated three SEL programs, which included *Bucket Filling*, *Leader in Me*, and *Conscious Discipline* as part of their school-wide SEL approach. The concept of *Bucket Filling* is that everyone has an invisible bucket with an invisible dipper. Each person can use the invisible dipper to fill another person’s bucket as well as their own bucket through acts of *kindness*, which produces good thoughts and feelings. In contrast, students were taught that when they do or say anything unkind to another person, they are being a bucket dipper, which removed the pleasant thoughts and feelings from that person as well as their own bucket. However, students were also taught to keep their “lid on tight” when someone is dipping into their bucket or in other words, to not listen or believe the hurtful words of the bucket dipper.

In comparison, the *Leader in Me* is an evidence-based comprehensive SEL program that focuses on whole school improvement. *Leader in Me* engages the entire school community to support all adults with utilizing a leadership lens to create a culture in which adults and students engage in daily SEL practices (Schilling, 2018). These SEL practices supported academics, leadership, and culture at Taylor. Geared for grades kindergarten through sixth grade, the program includes free standing lessons that Taylor used in the school. *Leader in Me* involves 7 *Habits of Happy Kids*, which is based on Stephen Covey’s *Seven Habits of Effective People*.

Conscious Discipline is the main SEL program at Taylor. It is recognized as an evidence-based SEL, trauma-informed approach that integrates social and emotional learning with classroom management (Jones et al., 2017). *Conscious Discipline* includes a brain-based philosophy, a common language, structures, routines, and rituals in order to teach behavioral expectations, build school connectedness, and scaffold and reinforce SEL skills. The program includes techniques to support teachers with their social and emotional competence. *Conscious*

Discipline is endorsed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. The ultimate goal of the program is to create a healthy school family.

Data Collection

Collecting multiple sources of data is a distinctive characteristic of case study research (Creswell, 2013). According to Yin (2014) case study research is very challenging without clear processes in place for data collection. The data collection occurred over an eight-week period to ensure ample time for in-depth data collection activities. All data collection methods were scheduled with the school prior to conducting the study. Although some negotiation with the school site was necessary for conducting data collection, a sample schedule for data collection schedule is located in Appendix C. Data collection methods consisted of the following:

- Ongoing: Note-taking, reflexive journaling, and document analysis
- Week One: One thirty-minute classroom observation with one classroom per grade level selected from principal recommendations to diversify teacher participants. A one hour principal observation focused on the principals' behaviors and interactions during roles and responsibilities related to SEL, such as leading a professional learning community, faculty meeting, an open staff discussion, etc.
- Week Two–Week 5: One–30-minute observation of each school micro-context during various times of the day, such as arrival/morning, morning/midday, midday/afternoon, and afternoon/dismissal. One–60-minute face-to-face semi-structured interview with one classroom teacher per grade level were conducted with the teachers whose classrooms were observed.

- Week Five: One sixty-minute face-to-face semi-structured interview with one classroom teacher per grade level. Teachers' of classrooms that were observed were selected to participate in individual interviews.
- Week Six: One–60-minute semi-structured interview with the school principal.
- Week Seven: One–60-minute semi-structured interview with each member of the school leadership team and/or members selected from principal recommendations.
- Week Eight: One–60-minute semi-structured Teacher Focus Group consisting of teachers who participated in observations and individual interviews. One–60-minute semi-structured School Leadership Team Focus Group consisting of members selected from individual interviews and the principal.

A detailed description of data collection methods is described below.

Observations. Observations played a critical role in this research study. Creswell (2013) noted that observations are an act of noting a phenomenon based on “research purpose and questions” (p. 166). Direct observations were conducted of the school, including micro-contexts such as classrooms, playgrounds, lunchrooms, and hallways, as a non-participant observer. Using observations as a critical tool, this study employed the use of sensory information through “the sense of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste” (Creswell, 2013, p. 166). Thirty minute-observations were conducted in one classroom per grade level. The principal provided recommendations to diversify participants based on experience, age group, number of years at the school, and number of years implementing. Diversifying participants provided an opportunity to gain a variety of perspectives. An observation protocol, located in Appendix D, was used to document observations of classrooms. The protocol included examples of possible practices that could be observed in classrooms along with a designated space for recording

descriptive and reflective notes. These practices were based on Yoder's (2014) ten commonly used instructional SEL practices in classrooms. Descriptive notes included documentation of specific instances of SEL classroom practices and reflective notes were used to record what was gleaned from the descriptive notes and how it connected to SEL. In addition, the observation protocol included a designated space for sketching the physical environment of the classroom. The organization and structure of the physical environment reveals the capacity of the classroom to be conducive to learning as well as provide a glimpse of the teacher's non-verbal communication that informs students of the kinds of learning experiences that will take place in the classroom (Hannah, 2013). In particular, the classroom observation protocol focused on observing the use of instructional practices that supported SEL. The teaching and reinforcement of the five interrelated SEL competencies as identified by "CASEL—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making" (Kress & Elias, 2006, p. 594) were given particular attention. For example, while observing the classroom, expectations consisted of seeing lots of teacher modeling and reinforcement of SEL competencies through the curriculum, a variety of best practices such as cooperative learning to foster relationship skills, opportunities for student choice to promote responsible decision making, and the communication of clear expectations for behavior. Observing these classroom practices as they related to enhancing students' social and emotional competence facilitated understanding of how these practices were integrated or connected to school micro-contexts as well as the whole school (i.e., school-wide SEL). In order to mitigate observer effects, such as the participants not behaving in their normal manner, several 20-minute pre-observational visits to each selected classroom was conducted in order to facilitate the natural behavior of

participants during observations (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Further discussion to reduce observer effects is discussed in validation strategies.

The use of “persistent observation adds the dimension of salience” to this study as well as provides depth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). Four observations of each micro-context, such as playgrounds, hallways, and cafeteria, were conducted (See Appendix C). Each observation was 30 minutes in duration and rotated to facilitate observations of each micro-context during various periods of the school (e.g., morning schedule, lunchtime, dismissal). The observation protocol, located in Appendix D, was used to document observations of each micro-context. As previously mentioned, the protocol included examples of what to look for and a designated space for descriptive and reflective notes. Observations of school-micro-contexts included Yoder’s (2014) SEL instructional practices with a focus on observing SEL strategies that extended from classroom learning in which school staff and students used to promote an overall environment of safety, respect, caring, and a love of school through expectations, interactions, and responsiveness. The designated space on the observation protocol was used to sketch the physical environment and to capture non-verbal communication that relayed expectations to students (Hannah, 2013). Thus, the observations of school micro-contexts focused on observing various interactions between adults, between adults and students, as well as between students. In particular, attention was given to recording statements that represented the use of a shared language to promote students’ social and emotional competence. A shared language means that school staff focus on communicating common SEL practices and strategies to promote social and emotional competence (Capella et al., 2011). Observing these practices and interactions in the school’s micro-contexts provided opportunities to examine how they connected to classroom

practices and contributed to school-wide SEL practices. Dated field notes written during observations are included in the findings.

Principal observations. Four, one-hour observations were conducted of the principal by shadowing the principal in several roles and responsibilities that were related to SEL, such as morning assembly, team building activities, recess duty, and leadership meetings. An appropriate time was scheduled for observations with the principal in order to determine when she was engaged in SEL related activities. Observing the principal was necessary because school leaders are recognized as playing a critical role in ensuring buy-in as well as the coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of SEL in the school (Anyon, 2016). In addition, observations of the principal provided an opportunity to examine the principal's behaviors and interactions that promoted integrating SEL into the school's daily practices, such as modeling caring and moral behavior, supporting the vision for integrating SEL, conducting daily reflections with staff and improving relationships in the school between adults, between students, and between adults and students (CASEL, 2013; Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). The observation protocol, located in Appendix D, was used for observations of the principal.

Reflexive journal. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe the reflexive journal as a "kind of diary in which the investigator on a daily basis, or as needed, records a variety of information about *self* (hence the term "reflexive") and method" (p. 327). A weekly reflexive journal to record topics such as feelings, impressions, insights, concerns, rationale for decisions, and field issues and how they were resolved was utilized over the eight weeks of the study. Keeping a reflexive journal helped with managing biases as well as supported efforts to create an audit trail for the study.

Document analysis. Document analysis in qualitative research is defined as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based

and Internet-transmitted) material (Bowen, 2009). Conducting an analysis of the schools' documents supported examination of the ways that the school promoted SEL and supported the SEL Core Competencies as identified by "CASEL—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making" (Kress & Elias, 2006, p. 594). Documents analyzed included school newsletters, the school's mission statement and core values, school referral data, the school website and calendar, teacher-created lesson plans, small-group intervention activities, *Conscious Discipline resources*, and SEL team-building activities.

Interviews. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives, several in-depth interviews were conducted as previously described. Since the school administrator plays an important role in the school such as supporting teachers and staff and leading by example (Jones & Bouffard, 2012), the principal was interviewed. Utilizing an interview protocol, (Appendix E) one 60-minute face-to-face semi-structured interview was conducted with the school principal and audio recorded. The interview with the principal included questions geared to understand the process that the school used to plan and select an integrated school-wide SEL approach, why the approach was selected, experiences, challenges, sustainability, resources used, and professional development. Transcription of the interview and the expansion of notes took place within 72 hours. In addition, one 60-minute face-to-face semi-structured interview using the protocol located in Appendix F, audio recording, and note taking was conducted with one teacher per grade level. Teachers whose classrooms were observed were selected for individual interviews. Interviewing teachers was important to this study because teachers have a great impact on students' social and emotional development and achievement. Therefore, the focus of the teacher interviews included questions geared to understanding teachers and students' experiences, and their successes and challenges. Lastly, one 60-minute interview with each

member of the school leadership team (See Appendix G). Interviewing the members of the school leadership is important because throughout the research literature school leadership teams have played an important role in buy-in, implementation, and support for SEL in the school. Questions for the school leadership focused on understanding school-wide SEL practices, issues, and implementation.

Focus groups. A focus group is a method in which the researcher meets with several participants in a group to discuss the research topic (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). Two focus groups were conducted. One focus group included the school leadership or implementation team. The participants for the school leadership team focus group were the same members as those who participated in the interviews. The other focus group included teachers. Utilizing a focus group interview protocol and sign-in sheets (See Appendix H, I, and J), one face-to-face focus group interview was conducted with each group. Teachers who were observed and interviewed were included for the focus group. Both focus groups were 60 minutes in duration and focused on questions that allowed participants to articulate their role in regards to supporting integrated school-wide SEL practices. The protocol included questions that required a historical account of the school's SEL approach along with the decision-making process, adaptations to SEL programming, challenges, and lessons learned. The focus group interviews provided opportunities to understand the participants' perceptions and experiences in supporting integrated school-wide SEL practices. "The richness of focus group data emerges from the group dynamic and from the diversity of the group" (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, Namey, 2005, p. 52), providing multiple perspectives to consider within the context of an integrated school-wide approach to SEL. During the focus groups, follow-up was conducted of the themes that emerged

from the individual interviews and classroom observations. Interviews for the focus groups were recorded and transcription occurred within 72 hours.

Data Analysis

Stake (1995) acknowledged, “There is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations” (p. 71). During the data analysis phase, I read and re-read each piece of data several times, making marginal notes; and then, I formed initial codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seidel, 1998). Data represented SEL practices that were used in an elementary school. During the process of data analysis, writing memos assisted with capturing ideas that surfaced and sense making. Memoing is a process of writing down ideas about the codes throughout the conducting of data analysis (Creswell, 2013).

Stake (1995) believed that the most important role of the case study researcher is that of interpreter. He advocated for a constructivist point of view in which readers make their own generalizations through “good raw material” (p. 102), and he emphasized building a clear view of the phenomenon under study through explanations and thick descriptions. For data analysis and interpretation in case study research, Stake also recommended the use of categorical aggregation, establishing patterns, direct interpretation, and naturalistic generalizations.

After separating the data into small parts by forming initial codes, I began a process of collecting the data. This iterative process included sorting and grouping coded data into categories, thinking and sorting data while at the same time searching for patterns through an ecological systems' lens (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) to understand the contexts in which SEL occurred. I identified labels for each micro-context of the school and wrote the information on index cards. Then, I cut the data for each category into strips of paper and placed each strip of

paper under the appropriate school micro-context. I identified the emerging patterns by tracing the SEL practices through the various micro-contexts, and the case study's story of school-wide SEL programming began to develop.

Further verification of the results was conducted using NVivo 11, a qualitative data analysis software, which included a process of inserting data by creating a new project in NViVO for each type of data collection. For example, I inserted each type of data collection (i.e., teacher interviews, principal interviews, classroom observations, etc.) onto a separate page. In this way, I created nodes (similar to codes) for each project by reading and re-reading data several times and highlighting text and dragging the text into a node. Examples of a node included categories, such as professional development, support from leadership, and description of student support services.

After this process was completed, I began reducing data by sorting and grouping, and looking for patterns. As I reduced the data, I also formed new categories; however, I only had a partial understanding of the data. In order to understand the school-wide SEL approach, I had to combine all of the projects. I combined one project at a time; for instance, I combined teacher interviews with teacher observations and so forth. I eliminated the category title if there was a duplicate as I re-organized data into new categories. Through this process I had to pull data apart and then, categorize it in order to ascertain patterns and themes. Through NVivo, I conducted queries for further analysis in order to create themes, such as word frequencies, wordles, and charts. The ability to run queries provided a faster process for my interpretation of the data. Subsequently, I formed categories similar to the manual analysis. I used an ecological lens for supporting the interpretation of the data and a rich narrative account for describing how one particular elementary school integrated school-wide SEL programming into its daily practices.

Validation Strategies

Establishing trustworthiness enhanced the credibility of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified triangulation as a strategy for improving the credibility of the research findings and interpretations. This study employed data triangulation by collecting multiple sources of data. Data sources in this study included observations, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Additionally, Denzin (1978) posits that examining a phenomenon by changing time and space builds the capacity of the researcher to understand a phenomenon. Observations were conducted during various parts of the school day such as morning, dismissal, and lunchtime as well as in all micro-contexts throughout the school (e.g., hallways, playgrounds, lunchrooms, classrooms). When pursuing knowledge through observations, there is the reality of the existence of observer effect in that the presence of the observer influences the behavior of the teacher and students. As previously mentioned, the researcher conducted several pre-observation classroom visits to mitigate observer effects (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). In addition, data obtained through classroom observations was used to produce multiple interpretations and insights into the context of the school and school-wide SEL (Monahan & Fisher, 2010). Triangulation was used to check the validity of all observations with other data sources, such as interviews, document analyses, and reflexive journaling. Interviews were conducted with different role groups such as administrators, teachers, and school staff. Documents such as school newsletters, mission statement, school calendars, and school referrals also provided a means for triangulation by different methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Through utilizing triangulation strategies, understanding was expanded from several points of evidence on integrated school-wide SEL practices in an elementary school. Yin (2014) acknowledged that triangulation allows the researcher to develop a convergence of evidence in

which the case study findings are supported by multiple points of data. Mathison (1988) noted that “data converging upon a single proposition about a social phenomenon is a phantom image” (p. 17). Although data convergence can occur, Mathison (1988) discussed the possibility that data can be either inconsistent in which the findings are not confirming and not contradictory or contradictory in which the findings are inconsistent and contradictory. This study utilized a variety of data sources and explicitly described the data analysis process to construct meaning. Peer debriefing was also conducted with a peer who is a professional and who is an expert in the field of the study. Peer debriefing is a strategy that allows the researcher to build credibility in the study by consulting with a peer throughout the research process (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). The peer served as a critical friend listened as the researcher thought aloud, grappling with ideas and feelings at the same time. In particular, peer debriefing occurred during each stage of the research process. In addition, the researcher conducted weekly and as needed recordings in a reflexive journal. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that a reflexive journal is a comprehensive technique in establishing trustworthiness because it provides an audit trail to examine the researcher’s biases and extent that the biases may have influenced the outcomes. The reflexive journal included “information about methodological decisions made and the reasons for making them” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 327) as well as insights into the researcher’s speculations and reflections from the peer debriefings (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Ethical Considerations

When planning and designing a qualitative study, it is important for the researcher to consider any ethical issues that could materialize during the study and to develop a plan for how the issues will be addressed (Creswell, 2013). First, the researcher acknowledges that ethical issues can arise throughout the research study. Prior to conducting the study, a review of ethical

standards of conduct for research was conducted and approval to conduct the study from the institutional review board was secured. In addition, permission to conduct the study at the school site was obtained through the method prescribed by the school district. Participants received an informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study and ensuring that participation in the study is voluntary and would not put the participants at undue risk. Since conducting research at an elementary school site could pose a disruption to the school, particularly the students and school staff, every effort to respect and build trust with the participants as well as to explicitly express conducting the research with the least amount of disruption to the daily activities at the school site was made. For example, when conducting observations, the researcher remained a complete observer. The researcher did not gather data on students through interviews or focus groups. However, observations of students during interactions with teachers, school staff, and other students were structured by physically positioning the researcher in an area that is less conspicuous. Data collection consisted of interviews with the school principal and focus groups with school staff and teachers. This researcher acknowledges the potential for power imbalance (Guest et al., 2013) during interviews that could present a relationship in which the researcher is in a position of power. The researcher used a semi-structured interview protocol that was carefully designed to let participants' voices be heard without leading them into responses. The researcher rehearsed with colleagues prior to data collection activities. Reflections were recorded in a reflexive journal noting lessons learned to improve the interviewing process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, during previous experiences with interviews, the researcher noted the need to remember to provide wait time. Reminders based on practice sessions were included on the interview protocol to facilitate the interview process.

The researcher protected the school and the participants' names through pseudonyms and data was kept in a password locked file and server. Because the researcher conducted prolonged engagement at a school site within its real-life context, there was also the possibility that incidents beyond the school's control can occur, such as a dangerous environmental hazard or a substitute teacher employed by the school district threatening or hitting a student (Hamre, Pianta, & Chomat-Mooney (2009). Although this did not occur, the researcher discussed which types of incidents should be reported as well as how and to whom with the school principal. The possibility for ethical issues also existed with the school principal. The school administrator could have expected the study to provide a report to support personal outcomes. During full disclosure discussions with the participants of the study, the purpose and scope of this study was outlined. These conversations also contributed to informing the researcher's final selection of the school site.

Researcher Identity

I have served in the education profession for 39 years. I have had rich experiences in various roles from classroom elementary teacher in the public schools, a reading facilitator, staff developer, and a regional reading coordinator to my current role as a Senior Technical Assistance Consultant for a non-profit educational organization. However, it was my role as a classroom teacher in the New Orleans Public Schools that was the first triggering event for my interest in social and emotional learning. My undergraduate degree is in learning disabilities with a minor in elementary education. Although my teaching career was spent in regular education classrooms, my degree was very helpful because many of the students that I encountered needed the kinds of direct and explicit instruction that I learned during my undergraduate studies. Upon graduating, I was immediately hired to teach a multi-age classroom

with students of ages six and seven. I had never experienced a school as unique as this one. This school promoted education of the whole child with a caring and respectful environment that nurtured the heart, mind, and soul of all children. This included meeting the academic and social and emotional learning needs of each student. Academic and social and emotional learning were clearly evident in the school's mission, the inclusion of a creative arts program, relationships among staff, interactions with students, and relationships with parents and the community. In addition, the academic and social and emotional learning needs were integrated into designing and developing the curriculum. At this school, textbooks didn't drive the curriculum; rather, the school staff, which consisted of the principal, teachers, artists, and parents developed the curriculum to allow each child the freedom to grow and learn. As a novice teacher, I was thriving; however, I struggled with teaching my six and seven year olds how to read. At the end of my first year of teaching, I cried because some of my students could not read well and the students who were reading well, did so in spite of me. During my second year of teaching, I was amazed how one of the teachers took a non-English speaking student from my classroom and at the end of the year, this student was reading above grade level. I found out that the teacher was using Workshop Way®, which was taught at Xavier University as a graduate master's degree program via curriculum and instruction. Needless to say, I enrolled in this program. This served as a second triggering event for my interest in social and emotional learning.

In my studies with Workshop Way®, I learned a unique system for addressing the academic and social needs of all children. Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this system respects and nurtures the dignity of children as human beings, not by directly teaching social and emotional learning, but by carefully designing academic content, the structure of the school day, and teacher artistry in delivering lessons and interacting with students. However, to my

amazement, I discovered that this was the same system that was used at the school I attended when I was in eighth grade. Thus, this discovery allowed me to be retrospective about my own schooling experiences. There was a major event during my elementary years that was very traumatic to me, which resulted in my enrollment at a school in which Workshop Way® was implemented. During kindergarten, I attended an elementary school that provided me with rich experiences through learning and play. I can almost remember the feeling of sliding down the sliding board. However, when I entered first grade I was moved to another school because of redistricting. There I was in a new and very different school. All I can remember is that I was always afraid. Everything seemed so large and crowded with students and adults, like the building, the classrooms, and the bathrooms. The bathrooms were deep, dark and scary. My teacher seemed mean especially when she wouldn't let me go to the bathroom to rinse my mouth when my tooth was falling out. The students also seemed mean because there was always a fight. I can clearly remember being pushed inside a circle with children urging me to fight. There I stood in the middle of the circle not knowing what to do and not understanding why this was happening. When I entered second grade, my mother had enough of these experiences and moved me to our church's school. This is where I was immersed into Workshop Way®. This is where I felt safe. This is where I learned to read because I was too afraid to learn before. The choice my mother made helped to save me from further harm.

This experience has stayed with me and has left me with a deep impression for the importance of tending to children's social and emotional needs. It has truly fostered my interests in social and emotional learning. As a result, I can remember what it is like to see through a child's eyes when the world can seem so large and frightening. In conducting this research, I realize that I will have many biases because of my experiences. As a result, I have made every

attempt to bracket my feelings and subjectivities (Peshkin, 1988). Through the use of reflexive journals, field notes, and peer debriefing, my goal is to conduct a rigorous study that contributes to the field of social and emotional learning.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the case study of Taylor Elementary School, which serves pre-K through grade 5 children in a large school district in the Greater New Orleans area and its approach to integrating school-wide SEL. As previously stated in Chapter 3, *Conscious Discipline*, *Bucket Filling*, and *The Leader in Me* SEL programs are an integral part of Taylor's school-wide SEL programming. With schools increasingly adopting SEL programs, there is a need to identify promising practices that could be beneficial for schools to maximize the positive outcomes of SEL on the social, emotional, and academic development of students. This study sought to answer the following overarching question: *How does an elementary school integrate school-wide SEL programming into daily school practices to support students' social and emotional development?* In addition, the following sub-questions also supported the study: *(a) What are the critical components of the school-wide SEL approach? (b) How does leadership impact the programming decisions and implementation strategies? and (c) What has the school staff learned during implementation of SEL?*

This study was grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological systems theory, which views schools as complex nested systems of interactions and relationships. It is in precisely such a system in which SEL skills develop. Data was analyzed using an ecological systems lens, and five major themes emerged to illustrate Taylor Elementary School's approach to integrating school-wide SEL into its daily interactions and practices. The following discussion of themes illustrates how the various settings of the school, such as classrooms and micro-contexts, interacted and influenced the development of students' SEL skills. In addition,

each theme includes an account of the key issues that Taylor experienced while implementing school-wide SEL programming. The chapter concludes with a summary.

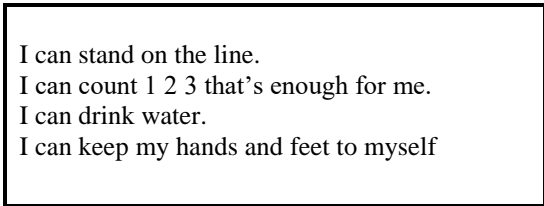
Themes

Theme 1: Routines and Shared Practices

Theme 1 explores how SEL routines and shared practices are purposefully and consistently embedded and reinforced across all micro-contexts of Taylor Elementary School. These routines and shared practices included *visual routines*, *daily routines*, and a *common language*. This finding was confirmed through multiple observations of micro-contexts in the school, such as the playground, cafeteria, auditorium, classrooms, and principal's office. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document analyses facilitated further confirmation of the finding. At Taylor, staff noted that *Conscious Discipline* is the main SEL program while the *Leader in Me* and *Bucket Filling* serve in supplementary roles. Close analysis of data revealed how Taylor integrated the structures of each of these programs to build a firm foundation for nurturing students' social and emotional development within the context of the physical environment. This theme encompasses the creation and alignment of environmental structures within the physical environment of Taylor. These structures consisted of carefully designed spaces within the physical environment of the school. The structure of the physical environment facilitated the teaching and reinforcement of students' SEL skills through daily school practices and routines. Hence, the physical environment is described in conjunction with the practices and routines it promoted within all settings of Taylor Elementary School.

Visual routines. Upon entering Taylor, I was immediately engaged by the attention given to the design of the physical environment. On the wall was a visible poster with two yellow cutouts of bears, which framed the directions "Follow the Bears to the Office." Below the

directions, there were yellow cutouts of bears that had been stenciled to the floor in the pattern of footprints to lead visitors up the stairs to the second-floor office to sign-in. A warm and happy greeting from the school's environment permeated through the use of the color yellow. Multiple observations, interviews, and drawings of these areas revealed that the physical environment consists of *visual routines*, which included pictures of students following written procedures in areas throughout the school, such as the hallways, stairwells, cafeteria, playground, bathrooms, classrooms, and morning and afternoon bus procedures on the wall of the school's breezeways. *Visual routines* are environmental structures that communicate expectations to students through images. These *visual routines* were posted at students' eye level. The students in the pictures were actual members of Taylor's student body. The procedures were written in a simple predictable fashion to assist students with knowing the expectations. For example, in the hallway by the water fountains, the following words were displayed in a visual routine:



I can stand on the line.
I can count 1 2 3 that's enough for me.
I can drink water.
I can keep my hands and feet to myself

Figure 1. Water Fountain Visual Routine

The repeated use of the words “I can” were observed in all of the *visual routines* throughout the school, such as the hallways, cafeteria, playground, and bus area. “I can” illustrated the predictability of expectations, which provided students with a sense of order and safety while acknowledging their ability to manage themselves. Ms. Judy, the school social worker, provided further insights, including how the use of multiple modalities, visual and written, supported diverse learners, noting:

And then, it's also very visual, *Conscious Discipline*. It talks about picture schedules and having everything going. And, I think for some kids, especially kids who have anxiety, that's very helpful because they can see what's going to happen next, and it kind of moves everybody along. Even having expectations of behaviors posted of the kids doing it.

Ms. Judy's comments illustrated the importance of guiding students' behaviors by establishing predictable routines that set clear expectations. The physical environment of a school--and the establishment of routines--influences students' learning of SEL skills. Students need to be able to organize and make sense of the physical environment. *Visual routines* in which students know what to expect create a sense of predictability and security (Bisson, 2018).

In addition to the *visual routines* for the water fountain, there was a line painted on the floor as a designated space for students to wait their turn at the water fountain. There were different colored lines on the floor in all hallways that were designated for classes to line up outside of the classroom as well as for creating space for several classes to pass through the hallways. As a result, hallways were observed on several occasions as calm places that were free from chaos. These *visual routines* provided the structure for explicit teaching practices and consistent reinforcement of expectations for students.

Observations of morning bus arrival of Taylor's students provided another description of the school's use of routines:

It is 8:00 in the morning. The yellow school buses are parked on the side of the school close to the breezeway while their engines are still running. Students are still sitting on the bus talking quietly. On the other side of the school, cars are parked. Parents and students are waiting inside the cars. Upon hearing the signal for the start of the school day, students quickly exit the bus and walk hurriedly down the breezeway. There are

wide grins on their faces. The physical education teacher, Ms. Margaret, is standing at the end of the breezeway, waiting to greet each student. The students walk faster when they see her. She greets each of them, smiling and calling them by name. There are hugs as she tells them that she is glad to see them. Several students stop to talk to her and she listens attentively. Some students try to run, but she cautions them to remember to walk for their safety. Students walk to the cafeteria to pick up their breakfast to eat in the school auditorium. The other side of the school follows a similar routine in which students are greeted each morning, move with a purpose to pick up their breakfast, and eat in the school auditorium (10/10/17).

The morning routine helps students to know what is expected. It also illustrates the school's practice of providing warmth and support and letting students know and feel care and love. Afternoon dismissal follows a similar structure with *visual routines* that convey expectations for student behavior, but it also includes a warm good-bye that is often filled with high-fives and hugs. As a result, students are happy to be at school. Ms. Rogers, the school principal described what she hopes visitors see when observing school-wide SEL at Taylor: "Well, I would hope that you would see students being greeted so that they want to be here on campus and that they are feeling that they are loved and they are wanted here." Ms. Rogers' comments illustrated how the routines for morning arrival and afternoon dismissal support the school's SEL goals by facilitating student connections and relationships with caring adults. Providing students with opportunities to make connections and establish relationships promoted a sense of belonging in school.

Daily routines. The morning routine was one of warmth and anticipation of the start of the school day—morning assembly. Morning assembly was a good start for many students who face difficult challenges at home. Ms. Judy, the school social worker, explained:

Our brain seeks patterns and that helps us feel safe. So, when students know that every day when they come to school they are going to have morning meeting, it helps them get their day off to the right foot.

Because the brain seeks patterns, Taylor’s consistent use of structures, such as morning assembly, opened students’ capacity to learn and supported a growth mindset for learning. Ms. Lisa, a kindergarten teacher, discussed how morning assembly supports both teachers and students’ mindsets:

I think my own mindset, like morning assembly, just puts a little smile on your face and even the 10 seconds to think of what am I going to do to make today better or what am I going to do to make today.....that's huge for me and I think it's very helpful for students, too.

Morning assembly was the foundation for implementing school-wide SEL. Ms. Lisa’s description of morning assembly illustrated one of the reasons that comments from interviews revealed it as the favorite time of the day for teachers, staff, and students: The morning assembly readied the entire school for learning. Observations of morning assembly provided an account of routines and practices that supported students’ social and emotional development:

Morning assembly occurred in the auditorium after students have finished eating breakfast and teachers had quickly assisted them with clean up by positioning large garbage cans near each class. Students were seated on the tile floor of the auditorium by class. Their teachers were also seated with them; however, some were standing, sitting

on the floor, or sitting in a chair. Inside the auditorium, displays hung from the ceiling and were posted on bulletin boards. These displays intentionally integrated Conscious Discipline, Bucket Filling, and the Leader in Me. Observations of these displays in the auditorium provided further insight on how the school promotes SEL and positive student development.

Upon entering the auditorium, there were visual routines that convey expectations for morning assembly. The school mission statement was surrounded by bulletin boards that celebrated the uniqueness of each student while connecting them to being a part of the school family. There were bulletin boards with displays of the 7 Habits Tree In addition, there were signs hanging from the ceiling that emphasized acts of respect and kindness because they are a Bucket Filling school.

On the stage where the school principal led morning assembly, pictures of the stages of the brain hung from the ceiling, which included the executive state, the emotional state, and the survival state. These pictures were used to support students' understanding of how the brain works. Also, on the stage, five written agreements were displayed. These agreements were commitment statements that students made during the morning assembly that promoted their confidence in their ability to manage themselves, respect and get along with others, and make good choices. Although the structure of morning assembly is a part of Conscious Discipline, Bucket Filling and The Leader and Me were integrated as components of the school-wide SEL practices. Overall, these structures were used to facilitate the routines and practices that Ms. Rogers led the entire school--teachers, staff, and students--during the morning assembly (10/20/17).

The field notes describe how the physical environment was structured and facilitated the use of routines that were used to teach and reinforce SEL. Displays that were posted in the auditorium were purposefully used to support SEL. Each detail in the environment was purposefully chosen to promote SEL. Ms. Judy captured students' experiences in school-wide SEL programming:

They hear it in assembly; they hear it in their classroom. And then, I find that it goes out to... when they go to P.E. and recess and lunch, which is the real struggle because less structure and less supervision.

Ms. Judy's description of the morning assembly shed further light on how SEL was taught and reinforced through multiple contexts within the school, such as the cafeteria, auditorium, classroom, and playground in order to support positive student social and emotional development. SEL began the moment that students entered Taylor and were greeted by staff. It continued at morning assembly with Ms. Rogers, the school principal, who reinforced the SEL skills that teachers explicitly teach in the classroom. From the classroom, SEL routines were integrated into other micro-contexts of the school, including recess and lunch where students often struggled because there was less structure and supervision. Creating this structure that included daily routines took time, which was a lesson that Taylor knows well. As previously mentioned, Taylor has been practicing school-wide SEL programming for seven years. When Taylor first started to implement school-wide SEL, they started only with morning assembly. In this way, teachers were able to learn and feel comfortable with only a small piece before trying it in their classrooms.

Common language. Ms. Rogers used a common language to engage students in SEL competence building practices; reinforcing how the brain works and the importance of being in the executive part of the brain; how to solve problems; how to use, develop, and practice self-

regulation strategies through breathing strategies; and making connections to being a part of a school family through songs, chants, and commitment statements. For example, Ms. Rogers demonstrated breathing strategies that facilitate self-regulation in the following conversation with students:

Ms. Rogers: Give me a strategy you can do to get back to the executive part of your brain where you can think and learn. Yes, sir, way in the back. (*Calls on a student.*)

S: Train

Ms. Rogers: Train. Let's do it. Breath in and out. (*Students participate in breathing strategy.*)

Ms. Rogers: Give me another one. Yes, sir. Right here . . .

In this conversation with students, Ms. Rogers illustrated a common language for helping students develop self-regulation skills by using breathing techniques. The repetitious dialogue provided ample opportunities for practice and reinforcement of students' SEL skills. Students showed that they were actively engaged by responding to Ms. Rogers' prompts. Using a common language, Taylor's staff taught self-regulation, connections, and problem-solving skills. An analysis of comments from interviews and focus groups indicated that using a common language to communicate SEL contributed greatly to school-wide SEL programming. Self-regulation, connections and problem-solving were also identified as areas that students needed to grow. Ms. Cynthia, a second-grade teacher, elaborated on how the use of a common language for teaching and reinforcing SEL was a shared practiced among staff:

And, all staff, it's not just teachers. The staff is involved in *Conscious Discipline*. When you go in to the office, they know the language, also. I've heard custodial staff use the language also.

Ms. Cynthia's comments demonstrated the consistency of staff with communicating a common language for SEL. Such consistency in language helped to communicate clear expectations to students as well as supported the development of SEL skills. For example, while observing Ms. Lisa's kindergarten classroom, Ms. Lisa noticed that her students were getting "antsy" on the carpet. Ms. Lisa responded to her students: "If you are being safe, you can sit on the big carpet." Ms. Lisa's response is typical of the language that staff spoke during observations. Rather than using language to control student behavior, she used language to encourage students to manage themselves. In this manner, Ms. Lisa fostered a safe classroom environment. However, learning a common language for communicating SEL skills required practice. Ms. Rogers explained:

Lots of practice. And, there are sometimes when I'm like, oh, we still need to work on that... But, I think just trying to use it in every little thing that we do. What does it look like? What does it sound like? And, having the teachers learn the language. Anyway, I think it's a process and every year, I think we get a little bit better in other areas and then, sometimes we have to go back and revisit.

Ms. Rogers' comments highlighted the importance of practice. Through practicing and building a common language, students were immersed in SEL, which provided ample opportunities for practice. By watching and hearing Ms. Rogers use the language at morning assembly, staff were provided opportunities to develop fluency. In this way, having staff speak the same language to communicate SEL promoted the development of students' social and emotional competence. Such competence building was observed in all micro-contexts of Taylor. In other words, no matter where students went in the school, they heard staff speaking the same language with the same expectations. This language often consisted of teaching problem-solving skills. For

example, during afternoon dismissal, a kindergarten student told one of the teachers on duty that a student had skipped him in line. The following dialogue was observed. Teacher on duty: “Use your big voice.” Student (*talking to other student who skipped him*): “I don’t like it when you skipped me. Please move out of my space.” When the student refused to move, the kindergarten student went back to tell the teacher on duty. At this point, the teacher appropriately handled the situation. The sequence described above illustrated the benefits of using a common language. By using a common language to communicate SEL, staff supported students’ ability to use an I-message to problem solve as opposed to getting angry or fighting. Thus, common language practices facilitated students’ development of SEL skills, which also supported a positive school environment. Ms. Judy added:

So, it's (expectations) pretty clear, and I think that's very reinforcing for kids because they are hearing it from everybody, you know, that they encounter.

Ms. Judy’s comment emphasized how SEL is consistently aligned across the school. Because of this consistency, expectations for students were clearly communicated, and students were more likely to meet expectations through these types of consistent experiences.

Theme 2: Physical Environment of Classrooms

Theme 2, *physical environment of classrooms*, focuses on how SEL is integrated at the classroom level. Since school-wide SEL programming includes coordinated classroom and school practices, it is important to examine classroom level implementation. Data from observations revealed that classrooms employed the use of environmental structures. This theme encompasses the creation and alignment of environmental structures within the physical environment of the classroom. These environmental structures were carefully designed spaces that facilitated the teaching and reinforcement of students’ SEL skills. The classroom structures

included in this section are *visual routines*, a *visual daily schedule*, the *safe place*, the *time machine*, and *job board*. In this section, each of these structures is discussed, including how some of these structures are embedded in other settings at Taylor to promote the development of students' SEL skills.

Visual routines and schedules. Similar to the other settings in the school, such as the hallways, bathrooms, and cafeteria, classrooms also used *visual routines* to teach classroom expectations. Ms. Judy noted:

Many of our teachers have *visual routines* in the classroom, too... how should you look sitting on the carpet...what are the different options you have and it's really easy to refer back, let's check to see, 'Are you sitting the way you are supposed to be sitting right now?' And, reviewing that over and over again with kids and practicing it.

Ms. Judy's comments illustrated how *visual routines* in the classroom expressed clear expectations and allowed teachers to model, teach, and revisit expectations when they were not followed. These *visual routines* supported students' development of SEL skills. The routines also supported teachers and students with managing the classroom environment by creating norms for high expectations. Because SEL skills develop in supportive environments that include "adult and child practices and activities that build skills and establish prosocial norms; and a climate that actively promotes healthy relationships, instructional support, and positive classroom management, the environment is a critical component of school-wide SEL programming" (Jones et al., 2017, p. 21). In other words, a positive environment and classroom management that consists of student-centered discipline strategies are critical supports for the development of SEL. Embedding the *visual routines* into the environment supported students

with self-regulation skills and provided constant reinforcement of expectations. Teachers also provided opportunities for students to have input on some of the classroom behavior expectations. Ms. Debbie, a first-grade teacher, explained:

We go over like a big one is scissors because I teach six year olds and they like to cut their hair and their clothes. So, we came up with our own expectations. Those are back there and we all agreed. And, those are the expectations.

For example, Ms. Debbie’s group expectations on the yellow wall of her classroom contained these expectations:

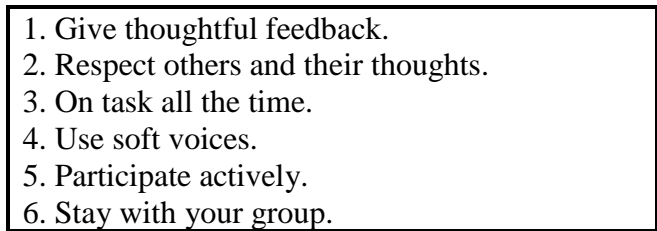
- 
1. Give thoughtful feedback.
 2. Respect others and their thoughts.
 3. On task all the time.
 4. Use soft voices.
 5. Participate actively.
 6. Stay with your group.

Figure 2. Group Expectations

The expectations identified in Figure 2 were written acrostically in short sentences in which the first letter of each sentence formed the word “GROUPS.” The intentional design of this visual routine facilitated explicit teaching of group expectations because students were able to see and remember the predictable pattern. These group expectations supported the classroom and school’s SEL efforts by implementing classroom management strategies that fostered student engagement; establishing norms for high expectations; and providing a supportive environment that targeted key skills, such as self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship skills. Ms. Debbie explained how she used classroom expectations to revisit expectations when needed:

If I notice that we've gotten off track, and we're not following those expectations ... we'll stop and come back to the front. We'll discuss it. We'll come up with strategies on how we can fix it. We role play. We show what it looks like and what it doesn't look like.

Ms. Debbie's comments provided understanding in how teachers at Taylor developed a process for classroom management. Having a process for classroom management allowed teachers to have the ability to address the instructional needs of students through whole-and small-group instruction. Such effective classroom management strategies provided environmental supports to facilitate positive student behavior and to assist students with managing themselves. These classroom management strategies consisted of student-centered discipline practices, which promoted students SEL.

In addition to the *visual routines*, each classroom was unique and matched teachers' style; yet, there was a sense of familiarity that was observed in each classroom. During observations, it was noted that each classroom contained the same structures. A *visual daily schedule* was displayed in each classroom. These schedules differed according to age levels. In the younger grades, the schedules were more visually-oriented, including pictures to designate each element or learning task of the school day. Teachers carefully spent time teaching the *visual daily schedule* and developing *visual routines* to teach and reinforce each learning task, such as lining up for lunch and transitions. The *visual daily schedule* provided a sense of organization for expected classroom learning and routines.

Classroom displays and bulletin boards focused on intentionally teaching and reinforcing SEL. For example, there was a *7 Habits Tree* that illustrated each habit on a leaf in each classroom. There was also a *Bucket Filling* sign that promoted kindness and respect.

Safe place. In the classroom, structures facilitated the teaching and reinforcement of the major SEL skills students needed and supported a positive classroom environment and school family. Nestled in a nook of each classroom there was a *safe place*, a physical structure where students can choose to go any time they felt upset and needed to gain composure. Observations

of the *safe place* in classrooms revealed various types of comfortable places to sit, such as stuffed animals, rugs, bean bags and pillows, books along with *visual routines*, displays asking how are you feeling, and charts with examples of breathing strategies. Students also had the opportunity to choose activities, such as a squeeze ball and journal writing, to assist them with moving into a calm state. Additionally, the *safe place* was observed in other areas of the school.

Ms. Lisa elaborated:

Well, even if you go in the gym, even if you go in the library, there's a *safe place*. In every place that you go, there is a *safe place*. If we are at recess, the *time machine* is painted on the cement, so they can do it out there. It really is just not in the classroom.

Ms. Lisa's comments illustrated how the classrooms and the school were interconnected at Taylor. In the classroom, teachers taught self-regulation skills through breathing strategies and the *safe place*; and then students were provided opportunities to strengthen and apply self-management skills during morning assembly and school micro-contexts. On the other hand, Ms. Sharon, a fifth-grade teacher, shared a different perception of how her fifth-grade students viewed the *safe place*. Although the *safe place* provided a calm space in which students could go to gain composure, Ms. Sharon shared that her fifth graders rarely used the *safe place*. Ms. Sharon explained:

I don't know whether it's because the kids feel embarrassed. It's a different mindset. They are maturing. But, I am also one that I don't let things stew. Some of these kids have been with us for years, so we call them Taylorized. They are aware of *Conscious Discipline* strategies and the *safe place*. Maybe, it needs to be an internal *safe place*. If they could just close their eyes.

Ms. Sharon's comments illustrated the importance of SEL practices that are developmentally appropriate and meet the contextual needs of schools and classrooms. Her comments also revealed that there could be other reasons why the students seemed to have outgrown the *safe place*. For example, Ms. Sharon described herself as being proactive because she handled problems quickly, which could have contributed to students having less opportunities to use the *safe place*. In addition, she suggested that because students had been educated at Taylor for several years, the *safe place* was no longer useful. However, Ms. Sharon also provided an understanding of how the *safe place* could be adapted for her students. By suggesting that students close their eyes, Ms. Sharon shared an important point about implementing the *safe place*, which is that the *safe place* is not about creating a space; rather, it is about the process of taking a break to calm down and really teaching the *safe place* as a process.

Time machine. Similarly, the *time machine* was another classroom structure that was used to facilitate the development of students' SEL skills. The time machine facilitated problem-solving and conflict resolution skills. Ms. Judy described the *time machine* and how it was also embedded into other micro-contexts beyond the classroom:

The time machine is where kids can actually go back in time and re-create a situation where they had problems. And, in essence, they use what's called an "I message" where they tell the person what that they did that they didn't like, and then tell them how they want that person to treat them; what they want to say and do. It gives kids a voice and a way to feel that they are being proactive and solving their problems.

Ms. Judy's description of how the *time machine* facilitated students' ability to be proactive was aligned with Taylor's integration of the *Leader in Me* with *Conscious Discipline*. The first habit

of the *Leader in Me* is “Be Proactive,” which focused on teaching students to be responsible and that they are in charge of themselves. Ms. Lisa elaborated:

We had a conversation this morning with a kindergartener who was just mirroring every bad behavior. We had a talk with her this morning and said that *Habit 1* says that *you are in charge of you*. It was easy to tie *Conscious Discipline* back to the habits because she was letting somebody else control her behavior.

Ms. Lisa provided an example of the interplay between *Leader in Me* and *Conscious Discipline*. Because the SEL programs are aligned, staff had frequent opportunities to integrate these programs in order to reinforce students’ SEL skills. On the other hand, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers expressed the need to tweak the *time machine* for developmentally appropriate reasons. Ms. Carla explained:

So, I have to get two together and say “tell him how you didn’t like that.” I have to give them the words. You need to say that hurt my feelings when you did And, you need to say, I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings. I have to give them the words because they don’t know it yet.

Ms. Carla’s comments demonstrated the developmental progression of a SEL strategy. Having this knowledge could support the development of SEL standards that include examples of developmental progression of strategies. In addition to tweaking the *time machine*, Ms. Lisa expressed limited use of the time machine:

The big guys use it (the time machine) a lot, and we talk about that concept (of the time machine’s process for problem-solving), but they don’t really understand. So, we kind of just don’t use that as much. So, instead of expecting them just to do it... they repeat it after me.

Similar to Ms. Carla, Ms. Lisa was able to address the developmental needs of her students through scaffolding, which involved providing students with the language necessary to accomplish the learning task. However, Ms. Lisa's level of use for the *time machine* is aligned with research recommendations that support the need to "determine which SEL approaches are best at different grade levels" (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016, p. 11).

Job board. Every day each student at Taylor has a job. Within each classroom is a *job board* that consists of the jobs that each child in the classroom is assigned in order to promote responsibility and citizenship. Star helper is a classroom job in which the student selects the breathing strategy of the day that teachers and students will practice. Ms. Cheryl, a fourth-grade teacher, noted the significance of the *job board*: "They have their jobs. That is huge for me in my classroom. It frees me up because I'm not doing all the things. They're doing their jobs. To me it's more student-centered." Ms. Amy, a third-grade teacher, added: "They feel like they have a part." Ms. Cheryl and Ms. Amy's comments revealed that jobs are important because they created a structure in which teachers shared responsibilities. Classroom jobs provided students with daily opportunities to learn how to be responsible in a meaningful way and learn to develop decision making and reasoning skills. Having classroom jobs also builds students' confidence and encourages them to have ownership of their classroom by helping the classroom work well. Ultimately, classroom jobs build a sense of community, which is key to teaching SEL skills. Although Taylor used programs to teach SEL, flexibility in how these strategies were implemented was noticed. Ms. Debbie elaborated: "Each teacher decides how jobs are going to work. And for me, I can't keep up with changing jobs every day. Some teachers do, but mine change every week. So, I change jobs every week." Ms. Debbie's comments suggested that having an SEL program that provides strategies and routines, rather than a structured lesson,

facilitated flexibility in implementation. Since schools often adapt SEL programs to fit their context, having built-in program flexibility could be an important factor in improving implementation fidelity in school contexts. Hence, Ms. Debbie shared how teachers can implement the same structure in the manner that works for them in their classroom. For Ms. Debbie, changing students' jobs every week was a better management plan for her. Ms. Carla, a pre-kindergarten teacher, shared how she used jobs: Our jobs are very simple. I tweak my jobs to make them very simple. The jobs are very simplistic for pre-K, which is fine. Today is Friday and our jobs go from Monday to Friday.” Although Ms. Carla changed her classroom jobs weekly like Ms. Debbie, she also adapted the tasks to make them more developmentally appropriate for pre-kindergarten. Understanding and documenting adaptations to meet the developmental needs of students could support efforts to determine SEL approaches for different grade levels.

Morning circle. *Morning circle* is a daily *brain smart start* that occurred daily in classrooms. *Brain smart start* is a series of activities that all teachers conduct within the *morning circle*. *Morning circle* connected school and classroom practices by mirroring the routines of the assembly. In essence, morning assembly was also a *brain smart start*. These routines facilitated SEL, helped students get their brains ready to learn, and built the school family. Ms. Debbie provided some examples of the *morning circle*:

When we come back from interventions we do *brain smart start* at the beginning. We look and see who is absent and wish them well. We look to see who has returned. We sing them a welcome-back song. We do our class chant. We sing a song. We do a connection activity.... We walk through different things we can do if we get upset. We can go to the *safe place*; we can breathe.

Ms. Debbie's comments revealed how *morning circle* consisted of routines that fostered opportunities for students to feel a sense of safety and a connection to a school family. Through *morning circle*, students were also prepared to learn through class chants and commitment statements. Both teacher interviews and observations of classrooms confirmed that the same structures and routines were used every day. Beginning with the morning assembly and then the classroom *morning circles*, the consistent use of structures along with routines to teach and reinforce SEL enabled students to know what to expect each day and increased the likelihood of positive student outcomes.

Physical arrangement of classroom. Another important feature of classroom-level SEL implementation environment was the physical arrangement of the classroom. Classrooms were bright and cheery and organized. Classroom furniture in all classrooms was arranged in clusters or groups to reflect frequent opportunities to participate in cooperative learning groups.

Teachers who taught pre-kindergarten to third grade tended to have more space than the fourth and fifth grade teachers. Thus, the design of classrooms in the primary grades included several variations such as flexible seating, table groups, and groups formed with desks. This structure allowed for freedom of movement, centers, choice, and learning with peers. The physical arrangement provided opportunities for whole-and small-group work and independent time. Ms.

Debbie explained how she used color coding in her first-grade classroom to form groups:

Well, I have tables, so they work in groups a lot. If you notice, we have color-coded everything. And so, it helps them remember what box they are supposed to work in and who is in their box with them.

Ms. Debbie's comments illustrated how she structured her classroom by using color coding to form cooperative learning groups and to meet the needs of English learners. In addition to

English speakers, Ms. Debbie’s classroom included Vietnamese, Spanish, Arabic, and Portuguese speakers. English learners were grouped purposefully during whole group and independent work by ensuring that they were placed next to an English speaker or a peer who could offer support. According to Yoder (2014), “*Cooperative learning* refers to a specific instructional task in which teachers have students work together toward a collective goal” (p. 14). Thus, cooperative learning supports the development of social and emotional competencies, which include relationship skills, self-regulation, social awareness, self-awareness, and responsible decision making. In contrast, some of the teachers decided to research flexible seating, which allowed students to choose where to sit, and some of the teachers had adopted flexible seating as a classroom structure. Ms. Lisa shared her experiences:

I started at the beginning of the year.... We talk about you need to pick a place that's best for you to work, not just because your best friend is sitting there.

Ms. Lisa’s comments demonstrated how flexible seating provided students with freedom of movement. Freedom of movement supports students’ SEL skills by helping students to manage their behavior. Students’ ability to self-regulate improves behavior and helps students to focus and be more engaged in learning (Berg et al., 2017). In addition, flexible seating facilitated students’ ability to make responsible choices. Choice was an important component of SEL at Taylor that empowered students to learn responsible decision-making skills. Choice was usually created on bulletin boards and used in various ways, such as with assignments and making positive behavior choices. Although teachers used choice in various ways, providing students choices was not easy for some of the teachers. Ms. Sharon shared:

I have a control issue. I want to make sure that students are doing what you need to do. Choice is the hardest thing for me and it drives me nuts.

In providing students' choices with assignments, Ms. Sharon expressed her belief that choices took away her ability to have control. In comparison, the third and fourth grade teachers shared their perspectives on providing students with choices. Ms. Cheryl further discussed: "Somehow, we think that we have to be in control of everything. Just don't be overwhelmed with it. It's going to take time. You are not going to see change right away." Before Ms. Amy started providing choices to students, she had to have control. She came to see there is control behind the scenes, and added: "You are in control." Once Ms. Amy realized that when giving choices she was still in control of everything the student did, choice became one of the most successful components of *Conscious Discipline* in her classroom. Nevertheless, choice is a practice that is an extension of a purposeful and well-designed physical environment that is guided by SEL practices (CASEL, 2017).

Besides providing choices, another way in which teachers addressed students' needs was by providing a structure for students to work alone when necessary. Ms. Debbie elaborated:

If you notice, I also have the green single boxes and the pink single boxes. There's also one on the floor behind you over there. Sometimes when you have a kid who is just having a hard day, maybe they just want to work alone. If they get up and go to a box that lets the rest of us know they don't want to work with a group today.

Ms. Debbie's comments demonstrated how she developed a structure to support students when they needed time to work alone. SEL supported this kind of environment in which students felt respected and emotionally safe to express their emotions. Any student who chose to work in the box felt emotionally safe because all members of the classroom understood and knew the expectations. In contrast, because the fourth- and fifth-grade teachers had about 35 students in

their classrooms, they did not have a lot of space. As a result, fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms differed from the primary grade classrooms. Ms. Cheryl, the fourth-grade teacher, explained:

My classroom is pretty strict, not rigid. Kids have a lot of freedom. But, with 35 kids in there, I have to be in control and I can have some behavior issues if not. But, I am also lucky and blessed that I have paras to come in and assist.

Ms. Cheryl's comments revealed that the upper grade classrooms had more structure because they had a high number of students. Although they were more structured, Ms. Cheryl emphasized that students were still provided with ample learning experiences that allowed them to develop SEL skills. Ms. Cheryl's comments also highlighted the need to differentiate SEL experiences according to students' grade level.

Theme Three: Common Language

Theme 3, *common language*, encompasses the social environment of Taylor Elementary School. The social environment refers to the way in which a school supports the interactions between its members (Iris Center, 2018). This theme focuses on examining the structure of the social environment in enhancing the school environment. The social environment is important because SEL skills develop best in supportive contexts while environmental contexts are also positively influenced by the development of SEL skills (Durlak et al., 2011, Berg et al., 2017). Since this study conceptualizes Taylor as a complex system that is comprised of the relationships between administrators, staff, teachers, and students, analysis of the social environment included observations of interactions within the various school micro-contexts. Observations of these interactions within the school revealed that communications in the school involved the use of a shared language for SEL. In particular, a common language was used to support self-regulation skills, foster positive relationships, and provide students with opportunities to improve problem-

solving skills. The following account illustrates the interactive process that school staff used to teach a common language for self-regulation, relationships, and problem-solving skills. In addition, the development of social and emotional competencies in managing the emotions of school staff is discussed in regards to supporting students.

Common language and goals. A major goal of Taylor’s school-wide SEL approach was to support students by creating an emotionally safe environment, providing opportunities to learn how to make connections, and improving problem-solving skills. An emotionally safe environment allows students to feel safe and to take risks while learning without fear of making mistakes, being threatened, or judged (Berg et al., 2017). In an emotionally safe environment, students are more able to learn how to develop positive relationships and handle conflicts appropriately. The creation of an emotionally safe environment at Taylor Elementary School involved the explicit teaching and reinforcement of SEL skills through a common language for communicating expectations for safety, making connections, and problem-solving. In order to create an emotionally safe environment, the school had to make sure that staff possessed the social and emotional competence necessary for supporting students. Overall, students at Taylor demonstrated that they needed support with self-regulation skills, such as controlling their emotions and handling conflicts through problem-solving. Ms. Lisa, a kindergarten teacher explained that her students often struggled with:

How to deal with other people. I mean a lot of our students... If they want it they take it or if you take it from them, they punch you. So, just that social interaction, which is such a big part of the classroom. They don't know that. They haven't learned how to deal with that at home.

Ms. Lisa's comments revealed why it was critical for Taylor to first create the conditions for establishing an emotionally safe environment by addressing self-regulation and problem-solving skills. However, her comments also indicated why it was critical for her to have self-regulation skills in order to maintain composure and de-escalate conflicts. School staff needed to be able to model their own self-regulation skills in order to be aware of their emotions, and to guide their thinking and behavior in regards to how they relate and impact students. Ms. Rogers explained:

I think emotions are absolutely key because when you approach any situation whatever emotional state you are in determines how you start to engage with that situation. It's like if you're driving a car and a pedestrian jumps out in front of you. If you're going 80, that's going to affect how your response is going to be versus if you were going 5 miles per hour. That's going to change how your response would be.

Ms. Rogers' comments illustrated how a person's emotions are critical in any situation and again, why it was critical for school staff to have self-regulation skills to support students. One of the reasons that Taylor adopted *Conscious Discipline* as its major SEL program was because it supports the social and emotional competence of educators and their ability to promote positive relationships. School staff received ongoing support for building their social and emotional competence, such as professional development, mentoring, and *Conscious Discipline* training. *Conscious Discipline* includes techniques to support teachers with their social and emotional competence. Despite the support for educators' social and emotional competence, all teachers agreed that one of the most difficult components of *Conscious Discipline* is their own self-regulation. Ms. Debbie, a first grade teacher, elaborated:

Because when you're being hit, when you're being stomped, when you're being spit on, when you're being called every name in the book by parents and their kids, *Conscious*

Discipline tells you to take a pause and to calm yourself down before you attempt to help a child or another adult or whatever. That's hard.

Ms. Debbie described some of the behavioral challenges that Taylor faced. In her comments, she also described a process for gaining composure by pausing and taking a moment to calm down prior to engaging with the student or another adult. Gaining composure is a part of a shared process that teachers and staff use to create a sense of safety when de-escalating conflicts. Safety is an important factor in contributing to a positive environment, which serves as a supportive context for supporting SEL (Berg et al., 2017). However, maintaining composure can be difficult when facing severe behaviors.

Noticing. In Ms. Debbie's comments, she mentioned *noticing*. Noticing is a *Conscious Discipline* skill for creating a safe environment. Noticing requires learning a process that consists of a sequence of steps to help calm students. Ms. Debbie described:

If you got a kid who is hitting and you want to get them back in the executive part of their brain where they can think and learn and process and be rational, then there is a procedure that you go through like step by step by step. And that's the thing that I spend a lot of time working on (*looking me in the eye*). Your eyes are going like this (*squinting eyes*). Your mouth is going like this (*lips pressed tightly together*). You seem angry.

Ms. Debbie demonstrated the procedures for *noticing*. In her demonstration, the student was able to calm down and get back into the executive part of the brain where he could recognize his feelings and control his emotions. Ms. Debbie intentionally described the student's appearance before naming the emotion, which is a part of the process for noticing in which the adult sees the student through a non-judgmental description in order to provide the student with a sense of safety. The dialogue also showed that language matters. By using "you" instead of "I," Ms.

Debbie shifts power to the student, rather on herself. Thus, *noticing* created a sense of safety. In addition, because Ms. Debbie was able to facilitate the process of *noticing*, the student felt a sense of emotional safety, which opened his capacity to learn and grow. Ms. Debbie continued to demonstrate:

And then, breathe with me. And then the child mirrors you. If you can get them to look at you, the child will mirror you. If you can get them to do the deep breathing, their brain will calm down. And then you can say you were angry because he took your pencil. And then the child says, ‘yes, he took my pencil; that’s my favorite pencil and now I don’t have one.’

Ms. Debbie emphasized the importance of getting eye contact from the student who is upset or angry. Getting eye contact allowed the student to make a connection with her. As a result, the student was able to mirror the technique for breathing. Breathing is a strategy for composure, facilitating a calming process to reduce and manage stress. Breathing is a strategy to support students’ ability to self-regulate, which helps with having the ability to function and learn. Although students were taught a variety of deep belly breathing strategies for composure, the primary technique was S.T.A.R., which is illustrated below:

Step 1. <u>S</u> mile!
Step 2. <u>T</u> ake a deep breath.
Step 3. <u>A</u> nd.
Step 4. <u>R</u> elax

Figure 3. S.T.A.R.

Ms. Debbie described the use of a shared language, S.T.A.R., for supporting the student with gaining composure. When demonstrating the shared language practice, staff would say the words that represent S.T.A.R.: Smile! Take a deep breath. And. Relax. Step three of S.T.A.R.,

“and,” provided a pause between inhaling and exhaling. Ms. Debbie’s demonstration of *noticing* validated the student by communicating that he was capable of handling and managing his emotions and handling conflicts. The student was empowered with a sense of self-efficacy rather than feelings of being a victim. Noticing is a skill that provided a process for safety, making connections, and problem-solving. Ms. Debbie continued: “And then you can say you were angry because he took your pencil. And then the child says, yes, he took my pencil; that’s my favorite pencil and now I don’t have one.” In this demonstration, Ms. Debbie showed another important part of the process of *noticing* by using language that is descriptive and non-judgmental. Additionally, when Ms. Debbie told the student what made him angry, she set up a prelude to problem-solving. Ms. Debbie concluded:

And then you help them come up with a strategy of how we’re going to fix this. ‘You can use your big voice. Go over there and tell him, I don’t like it when you take my pencil. Give me my pencil back.’ You have validated the child. They are in control. You are not handling this. *They* are handling it. Now, if the other child doesn’t respond appropriately, which most of the kids will, then you step in and help.

Ms. Debbie’s comments illustrated the use of a shared language for supporting students’ SEL skills. Through a shared language, Ms. Debbie taught the student how to be responsible and problem-solve. She helped the student only with the language for talking to the other students. Because the student handled the problem on his own, he was empowered. Thus, Ms. Debbie served a facilitator. Ms. Debbie’s language included another skill that students were taught at Taylor, which was to “use your big voice.”

Use your big voice. When students used their big voice, they were taught assertiveness by using an “I message” to clearly communicate. Thus, assertiveness promoted a safe

environment. Promoting assertiveness encouraged students to speak with confidence about how they want to be treated. Assertiveness equipped the students with the language for problem-solving skills. At Taylor, assertiveness was consistently taught and reinforced daily in all settings of the school. For example, during morning assembly, Ms. Rogers conversed:

Ms. Rogers: If someone does something to you that you do not like what do you need to do first?

Students: Use your big voice.

Ms. Rogers: Use your big voice. Use your words. ‘I don't like it when you are talking when I am talking. Use your listening ears. I don't like it when you hit me, so keep your hands to yourself.’ If your words do not work, what must you do next when you're on campus?

Students: Tell the nearest adult.

Ms. Rogers: Tell the nearest adult. On the campus, you must tell the nearest adult. You are not to do what?

Students: Take it into your own hands.

Ms. Rogers: Because who gets in trouble?

Students: You do.

Ms. Rogers: You do. So, first use your words. Second, tell the nearest adult.

In her conversation with students, Ms. Rogers reinforced the skill of assertiveness by helping students with the language that they needed to use when handling conflicts. These types of interactions built students' confidence and problem-solving skills, which contributed to students' development of SEL skills. In addition, she outlined steps that students should take in order to get help if their words do not work. These steps enabled students to learn that it is intelligent to

ask for help. Assertiveness in school micro-contexts, such as on the playground and hallways, is critical because there is less supervision in these areas, which research suggests that these areas are where students feel most unsafe (Astor et al., 2001; LaRusso, Brown, Jones, & Aber, 2009). Ms. Amy, a third grade teacher, explained how recess is used as an opportunity for students to practice SEL skills:

Recess is where as the adult you get to say, when they say, ‘He took the ball from me.’ Instead of saying, ‘Go tell him to give it back, you say, ‘Did you like that?’ You let them be in charge of it. So, it's a way that they can practice. That's where you can really do the noticing part of *Conscious Discipline* and help them identify their feelings and then, help them take charge and be responsible.

Ms. Amy’s comments revealed how a school-wide approach to SEL facilitates students’ SEL skills by providing ample opportunities for practicing and applying skills. In her comments, she emphasized how *noticing* helped students to recognize their feelings, take charge, and be responsible. Taking charge and being responsible is also taught through the *Leader in Me* program. The *Leader in Me* empowers students to be leaders by teaching leadership and life skills. Analyses of comments from observations revealed that the language of both programs is integrated in a complementary manner to empower and develop students’ social and emotional competence. Additionally, Ms. Amy’s response, ‘Did you like that?’ promoted assertiveness and prompted the student to problem-solve. In each of these examples, language is a part of Taylor’s structured process for developing students’ SEL skills, communicating positive school norms and creating a safe environment.

Learning a shared language. However, fluency in using a common language required commitment and training. Through a week-long *Conscious Discipline* training, Taylor’s staff

were provided intensive professional learning experiences on the brain development of children; how student behaviors are a cry for attention; strategies to build their social and emotional competence; and brain-based lessons on using structured language processes to address students' social and emotional needs. Yet, an analysis of comments from interviews and focus groups revealed that these teachers agreed that language is also one of the most difficult components of *Conscious Discipline*. Ms. Amy explained: "It's using the language. The language is more detailed. Just to focus more on the exact act. Not so much I like how you are walking in line rather, "You are walking in a line or your feet were not skipping a step." Ms. Amy revealed a shift from generic language to praise students, (i.e., good job) towards language that is specific to students' actions. Describing the student's actions supported the student by helping him become aware of his accomplishment, which promotes self-awareness skills. Ms. Lisa, a kindergarten teacher, also shared her struggles with the language:

The language is definitely a struggle. To say things like. "Did you like that?" or "Go tell him you didn't like that." But I do think after 6 years, that I'm getting better with that ... but it's something that you have to stop and think about often.

In sharing her struggles with learning the language, Ms. Lisa emphasized the difficulty of changing language and habits. Although teachers struggled with the language, all teachers agreed that they do not want the language to change. Ms. Cheryl, a fourth grade teacher, explained the difficulty that teachers experienced in changing old habits, such as the ones they learned in school and college: "I am afraid if I use my own words then, I would just go back to the old way. It's just that you have to change how you have always taught." Ms. Cheryl described language practices for teaching that were based on reward and punishment. Such practices are often associated with harm because they do not contribute to students' competence

in self-regulation skills (Heckhausen & Dweck, 2009). Ms. Cheryl also expressed the value of following the new language verbatim by being unwilling to use her own words.

Furthermore, analysis of comments from observations at Taylor revealed that staff were actively involved with promoting school-wide SEL practices that were deeply embedded into the school's daily interactions across all school micro-contexts. According to Ms. Rogers, every year implementation improved and sometimes it was necessary for the entire school staff to revisit practices. Ms. Rogers explained the school's approach to staff training: "Lots of practice. I think it's a process and every year, I think we get a little bit better in other areas and then, sometimes we have to go back and revisit." Ms. Rogers' comments reveal that implementing school-wide SEL programming takes a considerable amount of practice, especially with learning a common language. Field observations indicated that one way in which teachers supported their ability to learn and develop fluency with the language of *Conscious Discipline* was by posting charts containing sentence frames in their classroom on a small bulletin board or on the walls around the classroom. These charts served as a visual routine to assist teachers with recalling the language for responding to different student behaviors and situations. The charts included language to teach students self-regulation, making connections, and problem-solving skills. An example of one of the charts that was observed for noticing is illustrated below:

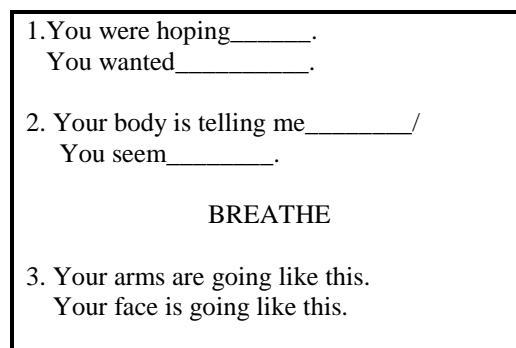


Figure 4. Visual Routine for Noticing

In the chart, the sentence frames are numbered to facilitate analysis. This visual routine for teachers illustrated the various ways in which language is carefully structured to explicitly teach SEL skills to students. The chart also illustrated that language processes are tailored to address the SEL skills needed by students in particular situations. Nevertheless, analysis of interactions revealed that the structure of the language remained constant by respectfully teaching students the SEL skills necessary for ultimately creating a positive school environment. Ms. Molly, a second grade teacher, elaborated on how using a common language supported students:

I think our children were not equipped with the language; what language to use; and how they are feeling about how someone else has made them feel. And, with *Conscious Discipline*, we are giving them that language to use.

Ms. Molly's comments explained the value of learning and using a common language for SEL. For Taylor's students who needed to learn self-regulation skills as well as how to interact and handle conflicts appropriately, a common language created the structure and consistency that was needed to develop social and emotional competence. Thus, using a common language was a critical component of Taylor's school-wide SEL programming. Because staff learned to use a common language school-wide, students were more likely to learn and apply the skills. Ms. Debbie explained:

We call it Taylorized, which means that they have been introduced to *Conscious Discipline* and we have given them a little bit of the language and how to do things that they can use to help each other. And, you'll see the children helping each other; the ones that have been here from pre-K and they see somebody who is struggling and they'll say just breathe, just breathe or do you need to go to the safe place.

Ms. Debbie’s comments illustrated how students have consciously internalized the language and how the language has influenced their behaviors because they were able to help other students. The process of becoming Taylorized occurred because school staff frequently practiced using a common language in order to immerse students in positive interactions within all settings of the school. These positive interactions influenced the development of positive relationships in which students learned to self-regulate, make connections, and problem-solve.

Theme 4: School Family

Theme 4, *school family*, describes a major goal of school-wide SEL programming at Taylor, which was to create a healthy school family. A healthy school family supports the positive development of students. Ms. Rogers elaborated: “The whole philosophy or belief behind Taylor is that it's about family. It's about creating a school family. It's about the child.” By nature, a family is an important structure for nurturing the healthy development of children (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015). However, since students needed additional supports, school-wide SEL programming created the structures necessary for a healthy school family. A rise in discipline problems was an important reason for the emphasis on SEL in Taylor. Ms. Molly, a second grade teacher explained:

I've been teaching for 34 years. And for me, I can see the difference in how the kids are responding to teachers, to one another, and that was definitely lacking appropriate response to others.

Ms. Molly provided further insight on the social and emotional needs of Taylor’s students when they entered school. Through the adoption of school-wide SEL, Taylor supported the development of students’ SEL skills by creating a healthy school family. Through the social

environment, a common language was used to foster positive interactions and relationships in order to promote a positive school environment and family. Ms. Rogers demonstrated:

Ms. Rogers: Boys and girls, you know here at Taylor we are....

Students: Bucket fillers.

Mrs. Rogers: And you don't want to be a . . .

Students: Bucket dipper.

Mrs. Rogers: And if someone is dipping into your bucket?

Students: Put your lid on tight.

Ms. Rogers: (*Repeats*) Put your lid on tight.

In the dialogue above, students are encouraged to “be a bucket filler.” Encouragement is a skill that staff used daily to support students in the school family. Students are encouraged to handle conflicts and problems positively, which promoted self-efficacy.

At Taylor, the school mission was aligned with the philosophy of *Conscious Discipline*, which was “It starts in the heart.” Taylor’s mission was illustrated on a cool autumn day during morning assembly in which the entire school stood singing along with body movements:

It starts in the heart.

Way down in the soul

It starts in the heart.

Brick by brick and stone by stone

We all find a way to build a wall

And all we get is more alone.

Can you see the stones have got to fall?

We can let them stand, but then nobody wins.

We can work together and find somewhere to begin.

The song encouraged unity as a school family. Singing together helped students to feel connected to school, which promotes positive student development. Similar to morning assembly, the school family was promoted in all classrooms through classroom *morning circles* with teachers and students gathered in a group area or a large rug in the classroom. In this structure, the school and the classrooms acted in tandem. Because the school and the classrooms were interconnected by the shared practices of morning assembly, students were immersed in a common language for SEL. Each classroom became part of their own school family through the development of a class family song. In first grade, Ms. Debbie's class sang: "You are my family, my school family.... We are the famous first grade." The classroom family song established and reinforced a sense of community. In essence, classrooms mirrored school-wide practices that promoted SEL through a common language of safety, making connections, and problem-solving.

Students taking ownership. Having a common language was a critical aspect of Taylor's school-wide SEL programming. Because school staff used a common language for SEL school-wide, students were more likely to learn and apply the skills that are necessary for promoting a healthy school family. For example, Ms. Sharon, a fifth grade teacher, explained how one of her students, who was taking a test on the computer, noticed that her classmate was upset because she had to wait to use the computer:

The little girl who was taking her test said, 'Such and such looks like this is stressing her out. Can she go before me and I'll go after her?' And I was like, wow. I mean they notice each other's emotions sometimes before I do because there's so many in there. And,

immediately they bring it to your attention so you can try to help them or they immediately try to help each other.

Ms. Sharon shared how students are able to apply the skill of noticing by using it to help another student. In Ms. Sharon's example, the student noticed the classmate who seems stressed. In this instance, the student was able to recognize the classmate's feelings through self-awareness. Her students became Taylorized because they were immersed in school-wide SEL that was deeply embedded into Taylor's daily processes, structures, and interactions. As previously mentioned, staff referred to students as becoming Taylorized when they were able to apply SEL skills and help others. Ms. Cheryl, a fourth grade teacher, also explained how a student modeled a school-wide practice:

We have a little greeter every day that greets at the door by giving high-fives. One time I was in the hallway and they all came in. It was kind of like five minutes. Mrs. Rogers was talking to me. That baby stood at that door. She stood at the door waiting until she could greet me.

Ms. Cheryl described how her students have internalized Taylor's greeting process. In this example, the student was influenced by the interactions and relationships in the school environment; however, the student also influenced the school environment by giving back the same warmth and support through the greeting process at the classroom door. These types of bi-directional influences were found to be typical at Taylor because of the support that students received through a highly structured environment. According to Bronfenbrenner (1995, p. 621), "these enduring interactions are called proximal processes." "The ability of proximal processes to produce and sustain development depends on the content and the structure of the microsystem" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 39). Because these proximal processes were positive,

students' development was influenced and sustained. In addition, students were able to reinforce positive school norms. Ms. Molly elaborated:

What's also amazing is that when new children come in, they immediately want to tell the new children all about *Conscious Discipline* and the things to do; the breathing strategies to use; the language to use. And, I love when they see if I'm getting a little upset they'll say, 'Please can I help?' I think you need to breathe right now.' So, they are very comfortable with it. It makes them feel empowered that they are the ones taking responsibility.

Ms. Molly's comments further illustrated the bi-directional influence of interactions and relationships. Because a common language for SEL was used in a supportive environment, students were more likely to develop and sustain SEL skills. As a result, students felt empowered through supporting others, which contributed to establishing positive school norms. Establishing positive school norms supported a culture of respect. Ms. Judy, the school social worker, shared: "And I have heard kids tell children, 'We don't treat each other that way here.' So, our culture at this school is that we treat each other with respect. So, that we don't do that kind of thing here." Ms. Judy's comments revealed that the culture of the school was clearly evident to these students. In this instance, the students were contributing to reinforcing positive school norms. Ms. Debbie provided another example of students taking ownership by wishing another student well:

We can do a *wish well* for that child. And we say he is having a hard time; he needs our help. He's part of our family. And so, it changes the dynamic of how kids see other kids who are struggling with things. They may not know why; they may not know what's going on in their life, but they know that they see their friend, our school family member,

who is struggling with something and instead of laughing and making fun, students will suggest doing a *wish well* on their own.

In her comments, Ms. Debbie is describing a *wish well*, which is a ritual in which teachers and students share good wishes for another student who is absent or who is having difficult time. In this instance, because students are immersed in the *wish well* as a daily ritual, they are taking ownership of it. *Wishing well* is discussed in the final section.

Family board. Another strategy that was used to promote a healthy school family was the *family board* in classrooms. The *family board* is a structure for posting pictures of the teacher and students families. Ms. Cheryl, a fourth grade teacher, shared:

We have the family board, which to me makes it more family oriented in the classroom because they feel; they see their family; they feel their family. ... We do share about pictures. You know, we put them up there. I think it just feels homey. It feels welcoming and warm and not rigid like some classrooms. And if you're happy....

Ms. Cheryl ended her comments with, “and if you’re happy... In this comment, she implied that creating a warm and welcoming classroom environment, produced happy feelings. The *family board* created a sense of belonging and feelings of being important. When students are happy at school they are more likely to learn better. Ms. Cheryl described how the *family board* created warmth and support and a sense of security for students. In addition, the *family board* provided opportunities to integrate SEL with academic instruction. Academic skills and SEL are interdependent (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). The act of sharing the pictures promoted students’ oral language skills and increased their self-confidence. The following section further discusses how SEL was integrated with academics at Taylor to support the school family.

Integrating academics and SEL. There were many opportunities for integrating academic instruction with SEL through common language practices. These practices promoted the school as a family. Ms. Lisa, the kindergarten teacher, explained practices for teaching SEL through children's books:

We use the Schubert series, which is the *Conscious Discipline* children's books and then, I purchase my own, you know, like if we are having a hard time with let's say sharing and taking turns. Then, I'll google books that have that as a message. Sesame Street actually has a lot of books that are amazing little social and emotional.....And they have a whole part of their website that's just little...like little three minute videos of teaching sharing and breathing strategies and things like that.

Ms. Lisa's comments illustrated how academic instruction, such as stories and technology are integrated with social and emotional learning. She also provided an example of how the school integrates other SEL materials and resources, which demonstrated the flexibility that teachers have with integrating content. Ms. Lisa communicated a common language when teaching breathing strategies and sharing. In addition, the Schubert books also included teaching a common language for SEL through student-friendly stories about a students' experiences at school. Collectively, the breathing strategies, lessons on sharing, and the Schubert series, teach students the SEL skills needed as a member of Taylor's school family.

Taylor also utilized differentiated instructional practices to teach SEL. For example, an observation of third, fourth, and fifth grade classes in the school auditorium provided an opportunity to examine the common language for the *Leader in Me* and SEL lessons for the upper grades in comparison to the primary grades. During this observation, third, fourth, and fifth grade classes were assigned a designated time in the school auditorium in which they

learned *Habit 2, Begin with the End in Mind*, from the *Leader in Me*. The school social worker facilitated the instruction and teachers of the specific grade levels and support staff worked with students in small cooperative groups to facilitate learning tasks. The conversation between Ms. Judy, the school social worker, and students was captured:

Ms. Judy: (*Uses a PowerPoint that she prepared*). When I begin with the end in mind, I plan ahead and set goals. I do things that have meaning and make a difference. I am an important part of my school and classroom. I look for ways to be a good citizen. Who can tell me what being a good citizen means?

Student: Do the right thing.

Another student: Help people.

Ms. Judy: Absolutely. You help people.

Ms. Judy: Before we begin with the end in mind, take a couple of minutes and share with your group what you want to be in life. What will you be in 10 years?

The example above was the introduction to the lesson on *Habit 2* in which students participated in a goal setting exercise by selecting a career, listing the responsibilities of the career, and then outlining written steps to describe what they needed to do in order to accomplish their goal. Ms. Judy provided the common language for *Habit 2*, which is *Begin with the End in Mind*. This task integrated academics with SEL and taught students to think and plan ahead. Throughout the learning process, students were involved in hands-on learning experiences and interactions that promoted critical thinking and problem-solving. Providing students with opportunities to discuss and share their career goals promoted communication skills. The lesson was also conducted within a cooperative group structure in which students were encouraged to share and work as a

team. Collectively, these learning experiences in a supportive environment in which cooperation was encouraged promoted a sense of family.

Rituals. Although an analysis of comments from interviews and focus groups revealed that these staff members believed that their efforts in school-wide SEL may not work for all students, especially those who need mental health care, they utilized the school family to support all students. Ms. Debbie elaborated on how the school family utilized rituals, such as a *wish well*, to support students who are struggling:

With the connections and the school family, if one is having a melt-down, if one is raging, if one is whatever, he's not seen as the bad child in class. Like we can do a *wish well* for that child. And we say he is having a hard time; he needs our help. He's part of our family.

Ms. Debbie's comments explained how Taylor separated the child from the behavior. In Taylor's healthy school family, there was no such thing as a bad child. Rather than punitive measures, students were treated with natural and logical consequences for their behavior. Discipline was a way to teach students the appropriate behaviors and choices. As a result, the rest of the students were able to act with compassion and wish the student well. In addition, *wishing well* is a ritual that is done often to wish absent students well who might be sick or students who are having a difficult time. A typical example of *wishing well* that was observed included the following situation in which the teacher asked students to identify who was absent. The teacher responded to the students by asking them to send positive thoughts to the absent student. The teacher and students said the following chant: "From our hearts to her heart. We wish her well." In this example, *wishing well* is used for an absent student. Both teacher and

students send positive thoughts and wish the student well from the bottom of their hearts, which fosters connectedness. Wishing well is part of Taylor’s healthy school family.

Beginning with morning arrival and morning assembly, and extending into the classroom, the school family is immersed in other micro-contexts, such as the playground, hallways, and cafeteria by providing opportunities for students to practice their SEL skills through a common language for safety, making connections, and problem-solving. At dismissal time, Taylor’s healthy school family ends with a good-bye. Ms. Lisa explained: “At the end of the day we have a good-bye closing. Another connection piece, you know, I’ll see you tomorrow; we’ll miss you if you’re not here.” Ms. Lisa’s description of the good-bye closing was an example of a ritual that provided students with another opportunity to feel and make a connection as a member of the school family. In telling students that they will be missed, students realized that they are important members of Taylor’s school family.

Theme 5: Leadership Supports for Social and Emotional Learning

Theme 5, *leadership supports for SEL*, encompasses the leadership practices at Taylor Elementary School that were essential to school-wide SEL programming. The importance of effective school leadership to successful implementation of school improvement efforts has been well documented in the research literature. Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby (2002) conducted ten years of research on factors that were related to whole school change and improvement, and they found the single biggest predictor of school change efforts that impact student learning is the school leaders’ engagement and active support. As illustrated in theme two and theme three, school-wide SEL programming was most successful to Taylor in an environment of caring, support, and high expectations. According to CASEL (2008), the most important component in a school-wide approach to SEL is involved and committed leadership. In order to implement

successful school-wide SEL programming, the school leader is chiefly responsible for leading and supporting the changes in the school by establishing a shared vision for SEL, modeling SEL skills for staff and students, and allocating resources to conduct professional development and to develop the structures that are necessary for ensuring high-quality implementation and sustainability (Fullan, 2001; Mart, Weissberg, & Kendziora, 2015; Waters, T., Marzano, R., & McNulty, B., 2003).

An analysis of interviews and observations revealed that school leadership is a critical component of Taylor's school-wide SEL programming in which students' SEL skills were taught and reinforced in multiple contexts in a positive school environment. Given what is known from the research on school leadership, in order to accomplish the changes necessary for implementing effective school-wide SEL programming, Ms. Rogers, the school principal, fully embraced and supported school-wide SEL by establishing a shared vision; building collegial trust and leadership capacity; providing feedback and monitoring; ensuring buy-in; and providing staff with the necessary supports for successful implementation, such as resources, training, and follow-up through ongoing professional development. Besides her commitment to school-wide SEL, Ms. Rogers demonstrated active and visible leadership support by modeling the social and emotional competencies that she expected teachers to teach and students to learn in all contexts of the school. The importance of principal support and commitment to SEL has been cited in several studies. For example, Kam, Greenberg, and Walls (2003) studied six inner-city schools with high-quality implementation of SEL and found that the schools with the highest levels of principal support were twice as likely to have significant positive outcomes in students' development of SEL skills. In addition, Elias and Kamarinos (2004) identified the school administrator's support and commitment, as well as the active involvement of a core leadership

team in planning and implementation, as the top two factors associated with successful school-wide SEL programming. Consequently, the discussion in this theme focuses on examining Ms. Rogers' leadership practices and how these practices influenced Taylor and its implementation of school-wide SEL programming. In addition, various ways in which Taylor managed issues that emerged in implementing school-wide SEL are interspersed throughout the narrative.

Establishing a Shared Vision for Social and Emotional Learning

The vision for SEL begins with Ms. Rogers' beliefs about children and how they should be educated. During an interview with Ms. Rogers, she asserted that before students can learn, they need to be able to self-regulate their emotions in order to have the ability to function and perform daily routines. Ms. Rogers stated that her beliefs are antithetical to the education system because of the education system's singular push for academic growth with little concern for social and emotional growth. Ms. Rogers explained:

I don't feel like our educational system is addressing the pressures that are being put on children and giving them the tools that they need to be able to deal with the pressures and the anxiety that they are experiencing.

In her comments, Ms. Rogers' discusses the impact of the education systems' lack of attention to the social and emotional needs of all children. As a result, she sees children from all socio-economic backgrounds and grades who are feeling pressured, which is creating great anxiety in children. Ms. Rogers also spoke from her own personal experience with her oldest daughter who is in the honors program in high school; yet, she suffers with anxiety from the pressure. The overall picture she noted is a "scary one in which we are losing our children" because of pressures from accountability and the lack of attention to addressing the social and emotional needs of children. Ms. Rogers' comments describe excellence and success in the manner of a

visionary leader. According to Elias (2001), visionary leaders believe that the purpose of schools is to prepare students for the tests of life rather than to prepare students for a life of tests.

Ms. Rogers shared how consultants at a principal's meeting described the science and social studies tests for grades three to five as kind of like Advanced Placement tests because they give students the opportunity to be exposed to concepts that are above the elementary grade level.

Ms. Rogers responded to this information by advocating for children: "And you know, I couldn't be quiet. I just said, we're worried about the children, right? We're teaching children. It's about the children, right? And, that's just it. We've lost the focus on what it is about. Children."

Ms. Rogers' response clearly illustrated her advocacy for children versus judging children solely on a test. Through her advocacy, she demonstrated that children and their social and emotional growth is a priority to her. When she saw a high-stakes exam that was likely to lead to student anxiety, rather than simply provide a measurement of student understanding, she spoke out against it. Ms. Rogers emphasized how she encourages this same approach at Taylor:

Honestly, here at Taylor and I tell everybody all the time, we're about children and every decision we do here has to be about children.

Ms. Rogers' comments provided an example of how she openly articulated her deep convictions about how students are educated at Taylor. Additionally, her comments illustrated how she establishes a school culture that values and respects children because all decisions are guided by what's best for children. She is adamant about preventing external influences from affecting Taylor's beliefs and decisions on how to educate its students. Ms. Rogers also emphasized how Taylor's school's philosophy and vision are connected. Ms. Rogers expressed:

The whole philosophy or belief behind Taylor is that it's about family. It's about creating a school family. It's about the child. And that's what you'll see. In my opinion, that is

hopefully what is portrayed from the top and should go all the way down to the bottom.

And every decision that is made on this campus should be in the best interest for each and every child. That is in our vision. I mean as far as that belief. It's all connected.

Ms. Rogers' comments illustrated that SEL is deeply embedded in Taylor's mission and vision. Her comments also highlight Taylor's creation of the school family as a structure for nurturing students. However, Ms. Rogers also noted that sometimes the biggest challenge is leading adults in this direction and making sure that everybody adheres to the school's mission. Although she is proud that the staff has been together a while, she worries that her staff is getting tired and feels like it is getting more challenging to lead them. Ms. Rogers explained how she addresses her concerns:

I just remind them over and over. You go back to what is our mission; what is our vision.

And when I first came on, we created it together.

By revisiting the mission and the vision, Ms. Rogers communicates clear expectations that staff made a commitment to implement SEL and motivates her staff by reconnecting them to the school's mission and vision.

Despite this inclusive and democratic process shared above, Ms. Rogers also sees herself as being headstrong on some things. For example, she is unyielding on school-wide interventions as a non-negotiable because school data indicates it is a highly effective practice. She consistently bases decisions on what's best for children rather than what's best for adults. Given this account of Ms. Rogers' beliefs, her leadership is a central part of developing a successful school-wide SEL approach at Taylor. The following account of the origins of SEL at Taylor gathered through interviews, focus groups, and observations of the school principal, illustrates how Ms. Rogers continued to establish a shared vision for SEL.

Origins of the vision. In 2009, Taylor had a major student discipline problem. Interviews with school staff confirmed this. There were fights, awful fights, especially in fifth grade. During this time, the school was trying to find a way to reach students and help them express themselves appropriately during conflicts rather than fighting. Ms. Rogers described how she began to address this issue:

I actually started with a team of volunteers....kind of put it out there. You know, ‘Look this is what we are seeing. These are the struggles we are having. You know we need to do something about it. If you're interested and you're on board and trying to find a solution, we are getting together on this date and time. Let's get together and be part of the solution.’ Then, we got together and started researching.

Ms. Rogers’ comments indicate that she recognized that it would take a team effort to help build consensus. In addition, she was laying the foundation for creating a shared vision for SEL and building leadership capacity in her school by identifying staff volunteers. Eventually, Ms. Rogers was introduced to *Bucket Filling* by a staff member. As previously mentioned, *Bucket Filling* is a program that conceptualizes acts of kindness through the idea that each person has an invisible bucket with an invisible dipper. By using the invisible dipper to do acts of kindness, students are taught that they are filling another person’s bucket as well as their own. Additionally, students are taught that when they use the invisible dipper to do or say anything unkind to another person, they are being a bucket dipper, which removes the pleasant thoughts and feelings from that person as well as their own bucket. Students are also taught to keep their “lids on tight” when someone is dipping into their bucket, or in other words, not to listen to or believe the hurtful words. As a result of using *Bucket Filling*, Taylor saw some progress because students were performing acts of kindness, which contributed to a decrease in the number of

school fights. The following summer, Taylor found *Conscious Discipline*. Ms. Judy, a member of the school leadership team and the school social worker, described how the school found

Conscious Discipline:

I went to something on *Conscious Discipline* and actually saw a video on a school called Fern Creek Elementary School, and I shared it with Ms. Rogers....She thought it was something that staff would be interested in. Over the summer, we did a little meeting with the PBIS committee from our school. We watched the video, and we saw that that school was very similar to ours in terms of socio-economic and racial makeup. And, hearing the teachers interviewed in that video, we could really relate to. And so, our teachers decided that, yes, this is something that they would be interested in participating.

Ms. Judy's role as a member of the school leadership team highlights how Ms. Rogers included a core leadership team to provide additional support. High levels of leadership support from the school principal and a core leadership team is a key factor in improving student outcomes in SEL and sustainability of a school-wide approach to SEL (Elias & Kamarinos, 2004). The core leadership team was instrumental in selecting SEL programs and planning and implementation. Besides mirroring Taylor's student demographic population, Ms. Judy stated that Fern Creek also mirrored many of Taylor's students who lacked the skills that are necessary in order to function in society. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a framework in which multi-tiered systems of support are put in place to address the needs of all children in areas such as academic, social, and behavior. Since helping students develop social and emotional competence at Taylor was paramount to students' ability to learn at Taylor, the PBIS committee and all of the teachers agreed to adopt *Conscious Discipline*. Getting consensus was important in order to promote shared-decision making processes and to create conditions for a

positive school environment in which staff are committed and empowered to perform high-quality, sustainable implementation. Ms. Rogers believed in collaborative decision making by involving the entire staff. Creating a culture of empowerment and respect in which all voices were heard was the basis for Ms. Rogers' leadership practices. Ms. Molly, the second grade teacher, reflected:

If you do begin on a great journey, like *Conscious Discipline*, everyone has to be on board and be determined. You are going to get a lot of bumps in the road.

In her reflection, Ms. Molly revealed the importance of having everyone commit to teaching SEL. An examination of data from interviews and focus groups indicated that all staff agreed that *Conscious Discipline* is not a quick fix and it's not easy. Yet, because of their commitment, they were determined to stick with the process of *Conscious Discipline*. Another important step taken by Taylor in beginning to envision a school-wide SEL approach was knowing whether a program works with your student population. Ms. Rogers elaborated:

You have to find something that's going to be best for children, for your population. You know. Look and see what your needs are for your campus. What are the weaknesses? What are the strengths?

Ms. Rogers also shared that it is also important to consider the strengths and weaknesses of staff. In addition to helping students, Ms. Rogers selected *Conscious Discipline* because it is a program that can also help adults personally and professionally. The school believed that school staff were not capable of helping students with emotional and social regulation unless they are emotionally and socially regulated as well. Taylor adopted *Conscious Discipline* and took other steps, such as inviting a *Conscious Discipline* consultant to come to Taylor, and sending a small team, including the principal, to an intensive summer institute in Florida. Only a few staff

members were able to attend because of other commitments during the summer months.

However, Ms. Rogers explained how she addressed this issue:

I'm one; I believe that you need to have at least one person in every grade level trained, so you can have somebody in each grade level be the leader.

Ms. Rogers' explanations provided an example of building leadership capacity for instructional practices to improve students' social and academic development. Building a cadre of highly-trained teachers can also create a sense of ownership over implementing the SEL program in these teachers' classroom and foster the distributed leadership support to inspire and motivate the entire staff to commit to promoting and implementing SEL. Having at least one teacher in each grade level trained in *Conscious Discipline* was carefully orchestrated to promote both teacher and student learning. Through capacity building, Ms. Rogers created the conditions for building leaders. She noted: "You know the problem that happens is that you get people trained, which is a good thing, but then they start blossoming out and going into leadership positions, which I know is a good thing." Ms. Rogers' leadership style of proactively developing her staff and promoting collaborative leadership structures created leaders. Her comments demonstrated that developing her staff helped to nurture leaders who ventured into leadership positions of their own. Although staff leaving for other leadership positions can be viewed as a problem for the school, Ms. Rogers' acknowledged that it really is a 'good thing.' Nevertheless, an analysis of teacher interviews revealed that teachers want to be at Taylor. The majority of the teachers interviewed stated that they came to Taylor because a colleague thought they would be a good fit and recommended them. All teachers agreed that they were impressed with the school's environment, philosophy, and principal. Ms. Debbie, a first grade teacher, explained her feelings:

Before I came here, I never knew the words *Conscious Discipline*. However, I was a Montessori teacher trained to begin eons ago, and so *Conscious Discipline* is very Montessorish to me. So, I joke to a lot of the teachers here that I've found my tribe. This is my tribe... we think alike and for the greater good.

Ms. Debbie's passionate description of finding her tribe illustrated that the school has a strong and visible student-centered culture that aligned with her beliefs and training. Establishing a shared vision for SEL in which staff are inspired is an ongoing process because schools constantly experience turnover. Taylor is also in a flux of change because the student population is very transient. However, the school's commitment to instilling a shared vision on practices that support SEL includes a standard process for integrating new students into the school community. Ms. Judy explained further:

So, we meet with our new students at the beginning of the year and kind of teach them what *Bucket Filling* is and what *Conscious Discipline* is. It's kind of a private little group of people. Ms. Rogers and I we usually do it with a couple of other adults, depending on how many in each grade level, to kind of welcome them to Taylor because it's a different place. Not everybody does this and some kids don't know anything about it.

Ms. Judy described an onboarding process for new students in which they are given an orientation to Taylor's processes for teaching SEL. In this onboarding process, new students are 'frontloaded,' given the information on SEL at Taylor prior to experiencing it in order to ensure their successful transition into Taylor while being in an emotionally safe environment. The new students' feelings of emotional safety were nurtured because they were provided the time to learn in privacy. An emotionally safe environment allows students to feel safe and to take risks while learning without fear of making mistakes (Berg et al., 2017). However, creating this kind of

environment is a process that does not happen overnight. It begins with a fully committed school leader who articulates a shared vision for school-wide SEL.

Active and Visible Support

Through careful planning of school-wide SEL programming, rather than a classroom only SEL approach, Ms. Rogers made a conscious decision to take an active role in leading SEL at Taylor. Ms. Rogers explained:

My thing is the reason why I actually decided to start school-wide is because I felt like I needed to walk the walk. I needed to show them because if you don't do that, then they are going to believe that you have not bought into it. And so, you have to get into the classrooms. But the thing is, they (teachers) can close those doors and do whatever they want in those classrooms. So, if you are the one that's walking the walk, you are modeling. You are showing them what needs to be done and this is what you believe in.

Ms. Rogers' explanation of why she chose school-wide SEL programming over a classroom-only approach provides an example of how she played an active and visible leadership role to support everyone in the school by modeling expectations for teaching and learning SEL. In noting that she needed to walk the walk, Ms. Rogers models the social and emotional competencies that she expects to see teachers teaching and students learning. For example, data from observations of the principal revealed that Ms. Rogers implements a school-wide morning assembly by modeling SEL competence building strategies that reinforce how the brain works and the importance of functioning in the executive part of the brain in order to make decisions. These competence building strategies, which consist of routines to support students with self-regulation, problem-solving, and relationship skills, are the same strategies that teachers are expected to implement and students are expected to learn. Ultimately, modeling social and

emotional competencies is how she views her role in the school. Hence, this section examines how Ms. Rogers continued to articulate a shared vision for SEL through active and leadership visible support.

Observations at Taylor revealed that Ms. Rogers is rarely seated at her desk in her office. She is actively engaged and visible throughout the building. When students first arrive in the morning on the school campus, she can be found greeting students; modeling the warmth and support that lets students know that they are wanted and loved at Taylor. Next, with the entire school in the auditorium, she conducts morning assembly. As previously mentioned in theme one, morning assembly was the foundation of school-wide SEL programming that got the entire school ready for learning. Every day Ms. Rogers followed the same routine by modeling social and emotional competence for adults and students. For example, she opened the assembly by having a conversation with students. One such session included the following dialogue:

Ms. Rogers: Boys and girls, I want to thank you for doing the first part of your job. You are here on time. My job is to keep you safe and your job is...

Students: Help you keep us safe.

Ms. Rogers: And the third most important part of your job is to...

Students: Learn

Ms. Rogers: To learn. And it's time for our day of learning to begin. And now that you are on our campus, let's agree to our five agreements. So, repeat after me. (*Students repeat the following agreements after Ms. Rogers.*)

I am going to see the best in others.

I am going to listen to the ideas and opinions of others today.

I am going to use a quiet inside voice.

I am going to use gentle touches today.

I am going to use walking feet today.

In her conversation, Ms. Rogers illustrated how she walks the walk to support staff with maintaining a safe environment as well as assisting students with being responsible by inviting them to assist her with keeping them safe. By serving as the instructional leader, Ms. Rogers established an emotionally safe environment in which students are able to feel a sense of belonging. This finding was supported through observations; and it was evident at morning assembly in which students listened attentively to Ms. Rogers' utterances and completed them when she paused for a response.

During morning assembly, Ms. Rogers used a common language to teach and reinforce SEL skills. As previously mentioned, Taylor utilized a common language for promoting social and emotional competence throughout the building, including at morning assembly. The use of a common language for communicating and promoting positive SEL skills at Taylor fostered coherence for school-wide SEL programming. Whether it's in the hallway, on the playground or in the cafeteria, the same language is heard as it is being used to teach and reinforce positive SEL skills. Through a common language, staff "think alike for the greater good." However, the language is intentionally structured by *Conscious Discipline* to positively influence feelings and behaviors. Ms. Rogers realized that such a change in language habits would be difficult for staff. By using a common language to teach and reinforce students' SEL skills during morning assembly, Ms. Rogers actively supported staff by building their confidence and competence in using the language.

In addition to morning assembly serving as a means to build the confidence and competence of staff in using the language, it also served as the way in which Ms. Rogers

scaffolded learning to promote teachers' competence in teaching and reinforcing SEL in their classrooms. Ms. Judy, the school social worker, explained:

So, we started out where Ms. Rogers did morning assembly and that was probably it and some of the introductory things. And then, the following year we would encourage the teachers to do a morning meeting and have a safe place in their classroom. So, it's like a building. It's something you absolutely have to build. It's not a quick fix answer. It's not a quick fix for adults and it's not a quick fix for kids. It's something that has to become part of you. So, I think chunking it and doing it that way and definitely utilizing the materials and the resources that are out there...

In her comments, Ms. Judy described how Mrs. Roger provided the leadership support that she deemed necessary for successfully implementing school-wide SEL. Ms. Rogers' implemented a process of deliberately sequencing and scaffolding school-wide SEL at Taylor Elementary School. The process of implementing small parts of school-wide SEL at a time or chunking enabled the school to gradually build and sustain a school-wide SEL program in which social and emotional competencies are consistently taught and reinforced through ample practice. A close examination of Ms. Rogers' process for initial implementation of school-wide SEL programming showed that it was very effective for several reasons. First, Taylor's staff confirmed that *Conscious Discipline* is a comprehensive curriculum with a lot of parts to learn, which increases the learning curve. Second, before Taylor could even begin to integrate school-wide SEL, Ms. Rogers knew that she had to model and scaffold learning of *Conscious Discipline* to build teachers' confidence and communicate expectations for teaching and learning SEL. Third, sequencing and scaffolding provided all staff with the time to learn and develop and improve SEL practices. Ms. Rogers shared her perspective:

We started off Conscious Discipline by doing school-wide assembly so that teachers would have buy-in. And, it was through modeling of the structures; so, then they could carry it into their classrooms. So, the first year that we did it, they didn't even start with *brain smart start*; it was just morning assembly. They could see the structures because basically morning assembly is a *brain smart start*, you know, in most aspects.

Ms. Rogers' comments demonstrated how she made sure that teachers were prepared to implement new practices by modeling the structures of *Conscious Discipline*. Through daily demonstrations of the structures in a predictable routine, Ms. Rogers fostered buy-in and teachers took ownership of facilitating SEL because they were able to mirror the same structures in their classrooms as well as in other contexts of the school. As previously mentioned in theme one, *brain smart start* is a daily routine of activities designed to teach and reinforce students' SEL skills, which occurs at morning assembly and classroom *morning circles*. After *Conscious Discipline* was fully implemented in Taylor's classrooms, the focus for integration moved to other contexts of the school, such as the playground, cafeteria, and hallways. Additionally, other staff, such as the physical education teacher and reading coach, added SEL processes and structures in their classrooms. Through morning assembly, Ms. Rogers supported both adults and students by creating a space and time to promote their social and emotional competence.

Promoting a Positive School Environment

In hindsight, observations of Ms. Rogers also revealed that she had an energetic personality that exudes a genuine sense of purpose and enthusiasm. After morning assembly, she often whizzed by, but never forgot to greet anyone who passed near her. She was unafraid to display a flair for the dramatics. For example, on a fall day prior to Halloween and after leading morning assembly fully garbed in a Halloween costume, Ms. Rogers walked to the second-floor

hallway and powerfully proclaimed that it was a beautiful day at Taylor. When asked to discuss some examples of how she promotes a positive school environment, Ms. Rogers responded jokingly: “Act like a crazy woman.” Whether on stage in the auditorium at morning assembly or anywhere on the school campus, Ms. Rogers showed that she is dedicated to promoting a positive school environment for learning. Ms. Judy explained:

Ms. Rogers is always looking for ways for kids to learn, but in a way that's not traditional sit in your desk. You know like, I'll give you a worksheet that you can fill out. She likes hands-on, experiential kind of things.

Ms. Judy described how Ms. Rogers’ encouraged the development of other school-wide SEL practices to promote a positive environment for learning. Several of these school-wide practices were observed as a way to use holiday celebrations to reinforce SEL in a fun experience. For example, to celebrate Thanksgiving, Ms. Rogers developed the *Turkey Race*. The *Turkey Race* is a school-wide scavenger hunt that consists of academic and social and emotional learning tasks that students complete at various stations in the school with guidance from an adult leader. The adult leader is usually a classroom teacher or a parent volunteer. Each grade level has an assigned time to participate in the Turkey Race where they are divided into small groups. The purpose of *Turkey Race* is to foster relationship skills through team building. Students get to know each other because they are not on a team with students from their classroom. In addition, students received one piece of a paper turkey, which they assembled as a team once they had received all pieces through completing learning tasks at each station.

Analyses of observations during the *Turkey Race* revealed that it is a fun and interactive learning experience in which Ms. Rogers leads in the school gymnasium by explaining the directions and expectations for the race. Students learned that the *Turkey Race* is not a race in

which students run; rather, they are to walk at a fast pace to complete the scavenger hunt with their team and adult leader. The *Turkey Race* provided competence building learning tasks from *Conscious Discipline, the Leader in Me, and Bucket Filling*. After completing the stations, the students completed an obstacle course consisting of structures in which students used problem-solving skills to complete. These learning tasks focused on promoting self-regulation, problem-solving, and relationship skills as well as ways to foster kindness. Through the *Turkey Race*, Ms. Rogers promoted a positive school environment in several ways. First, she fostered positive relationships by establishing cooperative learning structures to reinforce students' SEL skills. Second, the learning tasks were developed to provide frequent opportunities for students to engage in learning tasks to promote kindness, self-regulation, problem solving, and relationship skills. Consistent attention to these skills helped to shape a positive school environment (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Third, Ms. Rogers fostered caring relationships between students and adults by having classroom teachers and parent volunteers work with students to complete the scavenger hunt. As a result, data from observations revealed that adults interacted positively with students, which contributed to students being engaged and behaving appropriately. Collectively, Ms. Rogers used all of these factors to develop the structures for the Turkey Race in order to promote a positive environment.

Other holiday-themed activities included the *Winter Wonderland of Literacy* and the *Hall of the 7 Habits*. The *Winter Wonderland of Literacy* and *Hall of the 7 Habits* are a Christmas holiday-themed activity held one day before the holiday break in the evening at the school. Document analyses indicated that parents and their children rotated to different areas of the school and spent the evening engaged in the literacy activities integrated with SEL. In early

December, the *Hall of the 7 Habits* was observed in the main building of the campus on the first floor:

At the entrance of the hallway is a welcoming sign with “Welcome to our Hall of the 7 Habits.” From the entrance, there is a magical sight of Christmas trees that are lined up on each side of the hallway. Each grade level has decorated a tree with one of the seven habits, which Ms. Rogers assigned to them. For example, prekindergarten has the first habit, which is “Be Proactive”. The hallway is full of red and green colored decorations that twinkle through the Christmas lights and a single gingerbread house that is nestled by an opened door. In the midst of the festive and lively scenery, Santa Claus is standing with his sleigh and his dear elf. The younger students touch him as if to see if he is real. However, what resonates mostly is the sign in each tree with one of the seven habits that staff use to reinforce students’ SEL skills. Everyone who passes through the hallway stops to read the signs on each tree (12/6/17).

The above account illustrates the *Winter Wonderland of Literacy* and the *Hall of the 7 Habits* and provides another example of how Ms. Rogers promoted a positive school environment. Through this holiday-themed activity, Ms. Rogers’ created a sense of community by inviting parents to participate in an evening of learning in which literacy was infused with SEL. Inviting parents to participate with their children in literacy activities infused with SEL helped to build relationships between home and school in which parents were engaged in supporting the school’s academic and social and emotional learning goals. In addition, the Christmas trees adorned with the *7 Habits of Happy Children* created a warm and supportive environment in which staff consistently reinforced students’ SEL skills.

Other activities accomplished by each grade level also promoted a positive school environment and supported positive student development. These activities included monthly buddy activities, service projects, and team-building activities. Monthly buddy activities were developed because staff felt that some of Taylor's students needed mentors. During interviews, staff expressed that some of the younger kids and some of the older kids need to be able to help others and make connections. Ms. Judy explained how Ms. Rogers addressed students' needs through monthly buddy activities:

We paired classes. For example, we'll have activities once a month where maybe a fifth-grade class is buddied with a kindergarten class. And then they will do an activity surrounding *Conscious Discipline* or we have also used the *Inside-Out*, that movie about the feelings; identifying different feelings. And, we'll have activities and we always incorporate a connection activity where maybe they'll have to sing a song or do an "*I Love You Ritual*," the older and the younger child to create those bonds, which helps integrate the brain and get people back into the executive part of their brain.

Ms. Judy's description of the buddy activity in which each student has a buddy showed how the school promotes a sense of belonging and positive student relationships and interactions while also focusing on brain-based learning practices. As previously mentioned, Taylors' students had difficulty with self-regulation and getting along with others. The buddy activity helped to address students' needs by getting them into the executive part of the brain in which they can perform self-regulation skills, such as managing their emotions and figuring out what to do in tough situations.

In addition, Ms. Rogers was a big advocate for service projects. For example, during this study, different grade levels adopted different agencies or places in the community. In previous

years, fifth grade classes adopted a nursing home in which service activities included making cards for the residence of the nursing home. Another grade level's service projects involved the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). The students sent supplies, such as blankets and newspapers for the pets. Ms. Sharon, a fifth grade teacher, discussed the benefits of service projects: "I think when you teach kids that, on many different levels you are...setting a tone for their character and what needs to happen." Ms. Sharon's comments described how providing students with different service projects each year built students' character by promoting caring and responsible students who can contribute to society. By advocating for service projects, Ms. Rogers fostered a positive school environment by connecting students to the community, which provided students with authentic experiences to enhance and apply their SEL skills. Through authentic experiences, service projects also promoted student engagement, which contributed to a positive school environment.

Another strategy used at Taylor to strengthen school culture was beginning the school year with team building. The team building activity created a sense that Taylor is a school family. As previously mentioned when describing the school's beliefs, the whole philosophy behind Taylor is that it's about family, creating the school family; and it's about the child. Thus, team building activities were developed based on the skills that students needed to improve in order to work together. For example, Taylor used different activities each year, such as a communication game, a relay race, having students brainstorm ways in which they can fill another person's bucket or develop some new breathing strategies to share. Students had also experienced building a structure out of marshmallows and straws and naming their structure. These team building activities helped to shape a positive environment at Taylor. Ms. Rogers elaborated:

We know that all children learn differently. So, it's important to kind of tap into every child's learning style and try to give them a broad range in order to fit the learning style that they have while still promoting that positive climate.

Ms. Rogers' comments exemplified her focus on Taylor's students as well as her focus on promoting a positive school environment. She recognized that creating a positive school environment supports students' development of SEL skills. Ms. Rogers also had a creative way of conducting SEL activities with her staff. Ms. Carla, a pre-kindergarten teacher, shared:

We do an activity or a game where teachers are making connections with each other. Ms. Rogers does it every year. We're playing a game; having a race. We are divided up into teams. So, we're connecting with each other and laughing. We actually have to go and get in a car and find places. It's like a scavenger hunt. We make a video of everywhere we went. But we were learning. She is good about letting us connect like that. The friendships, the competitive edge, and the excitement made it special.

Ms. Carla's comments demonstrated how Ms. Rogers continued to model the learning experiences that she expected teachers to provide students. By providing an opportunity for teachers to make connections with each other, Ms. Rogers fostered positive staff relationships, which promoted a positive school environment and school family.

Implementation Support

A key finding from Durlak and his colleague is that in order to produce positive outcomes, SEL programs must be both well designed and well implemented (Durlak et al., 2011). Although the design of SEL programs is important, design features are insufficient for producing significant positive student outcomes (Durlak & Dupre, 2008; Osher, Kendziora, & Friedman, 2014). There are several conditions for implementation support; however,

professional development and technical assistance support; leadership, and financial and logistical considerations are a major concern (Osher et al., 2016). Professional development included training and ongoing support of teachers on SEL and the components of the SEL program as well as training to address their social and emotional competence in order to appropriately address students' social and emotional needs. The more trainings that teachers participate in, the better the student outcomes are in SEL and academic achievement (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012).

Besides professional development, ongoing support is critical and often includes technical assistance from mental health professionals, such as psychologists, mental health counselors, and school social workers. Mental health professionals can collaborate with school staff in order to attend to factors that inhibit successful implementation (Anyon, 2016). In addition, ample research has shown that high-quality implementation and collaboration between mental health professionals and school staff with providing prevention and intervention services to students within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework can significantly improve student outcomes (WestEd, 2015).

Hence, a key role in implementing school-wide SEL is the school leaders. Creating a positive school culture that supports school-wide SEL programming is mostly the responsibility of the school leader. Research has identified the school leaders' support and commitment and the support as well as the active involvement of a core leadership team in planning and implementation as the top two factors associated with successful school-wide SEL programming (Elias & Kamarinos, 2004). In addition, the principal and the leadership team are charged with financial and logistical considerations for implementing SEL. Some of the actions that are necessary by the principal and the leadership team include identifying funding for implementing

and sustaining SEL, planning and scheduling professional development, ongoing support and teacher planning time, and allocating resources. Consequently, successful school-wide SEL programming at Taylor did not happen overnight. It was a gradual process with several critical decisions that Ms. Rogers and the school leadership team needed to consider.

An analysis of the focus group interview with the school leadership team revealed that there were some critical decisions to consider in regards to training and funding. First, the school leadership team recognized that it was important for staff to gain competence in teaching SEL in order to achieve positive student outcomes. Ms. Rogers explained:

When we were at the summer meeting we decided to contact consultants. And then also, during the summer institutes sending key people from each grade level and then on the administrative team; so that at least one person in every grade level has been trained and has gone to the institute.

Ms. Rogers' comments described key steps that leadership took to get staff trained to teach the SEL program. By providing professional development, Ms. Rogers demonstrated her commitment to SEL. In order to implement school-wide SEL programming effectively, teachers needed ongoing training to learn skills that would support them with fostering positive interactions and relationships with students; creating a supportive environment to develop SEL skills, and strengthening their own social and emotional competence in order to handle challenging behaviors appropriately. In addition, Ms. Rogers was able to establish an onboarding process for new teachers. Ms. Rogers explained:

At the beginning of the year, we actually do beginning of the year training for new teachers. In fact, this year we only have one new teacher, so we have a mentor that works with her on that. In fact, we were able to have our Title 1 teacher push in with her to help

her with the *brain smart start*. And, then we also have grade level meetings. We also do follow-up ever so often through our professional development days. It is something we consciously work on through professional development.

Ms. Rogers' comments illustrated the role of leadership in planning and providing the necessary supports for implementing school-wide SEL planning. By providing an onboarding process for new teachers, Ms. Rogers' provided support that was tailored to meet the needs of teachers.

Other professional development activities included the following: the summer institute, book studies of *Conscious Discipline* and *Bucket Filling* books, ongoing professional development from *Conscious Discipline* consultants, parent trainings, and mentoring for teachers and students.

Analyses of teacher interviews revealed unanimous appreciation for the amount of time and effort that Ms. Rogers had put into school-wide SEL, especially with providing ample opportunities for ongoing job-embedded professional development. School leadership had also utilized intensively-trained district-level staff to deliver monthly trainings, professional learning communities, and grade level meetings. The school leadership team believed that because teachers felt that Ms. Rogers provided ample support, professional development, and materials, teachers were more likely to have buy-in.

Ms. Judy re-emphasized Ms. Rogers' strong commitment for school-wide SEL. Because of strong leadership commitment, school-wide SEL was funded through Title 1 and Taylor's Barbecue Cook-off fundraiser. Having the ability to fund the program provided opportunities for a consultant to train staff at Taylor during the initial implementation phase. Another critical area that Ms. Rogers and the school leadership needed to address was how to fund the SEL program. Because school leadership was committed to implementing SEL, they knew it was important not only to provide training, but to also make sure that teachers had the materials to implement

school-wide SEL. With the necessary resources and materials, teachers are more likely to have buy-in. As a member of the school leadership team, Ms. Judy, the school social worker, added: “When our administration decides that they want something, they go with it, from the top to the bottom.” Ms. Judy’s comments illustrated that Taylor’s school leadership had made a commitment to SEL. Because SEL was a priority, school leadership provided the supports that are necessary for successful school-wide SEL programming. However, Ms. Rogers noted that in the past it was easier to secure funding for school-wide SEL. She discussed that because of a district mandate, Taylor cannot spend as much Title 1 money as they did in the past for their SEL programs, which has limited some of the job-embedded professional development, such as having consultants mentor teachers and work with students in small groups. Ms. Rogers explained how she addresses this issue with funding:

We will continue to use cook-off money. Whatever funds we have with that. And like I said, offering professional development opportunities to the teachers.... faculty... when there are district trainings and they can come back and they can re-deliver to the faculty what they have learned.

Although SEL was not implemented in every school in the district, school leadership took advantage of district professional development sessions on the *Leader in Me SEL* program, which promotes the *7 Habits of Happy Kids*. Ms. Rogers’ comments illustrated her resolve to support school-wide SEL programming by finding solutions to funding issues. In addition, Ms. Rogers’ comments revealed that through her commitment to providing support for implementing SEL, she continued to build leadership capacity by giving staff opportunities to re-deliver information learned from district trainings to the faculty.

Teacher leadership. Data from observations revealed that the faculty was very active, often brainstorming, and problem-solving. For example, Ms. Rogers established leadership meetings that included representatives from each grade level. During an observation of a leadership meeting, Ms. Rogers and the staff discussed and analyzed academic, social, emotional, and behavioral data, decided on what's working and what's not; and then provided solutions to improve school practices and to address the needs of students. These leadership meetings have led to structures and services to support students who are not making progress. Ms. Amy, the third grade teacher noted:

Some of the kids go to workshop on Fridays. Well, I think for third grade it's multiple times a week. Like different kids each day. That helps build the skills that they are lacking in.... I mean the ones that are making bad choices. He (the behavior interventionist) splits them into skills so that they are not all together.

Ms. Amy described the leadership support that her third grade students receive. During observations of a leadership meeting, staff discussed the behavioral difficulties of third grade students. As a result of this discussion during leadership meetings, Ms. Amy's third grade students who needed further assistance to develop SEL skills, received additional instruction in small groups or one on one instruction from the school's behavior interventionist. The leadership meetings reflect Ms. Rogers' belief in finding solutions rather than admiring problems. Ms. Lisa, a kindergarten teacher, described another way in which leadership meetings have resulted in services to support students, such as having the school social worker provide additional SEL instruction in kindergarten classrooms and implementing small group student intervention sessions for students who needed additional support.

Another thing that the administration set up is that for a half an hour, three days a week, the school social worker teaches SEL in each kindergarten classroom. And another thing that they have done is identify the two students that are struggling the most in each of the kindergarten classes. Then, somebody else on this faculty takes two students from each kindergarten for an hour every morning while the rest of the children are doing ELA learning.

Both Ms. Amy and Ms. Lisa discussed the value of having the assistance of the behavior interventionist and the school social worker. The social worker and behavior interventionist services were valuable because teachers received support with challenging behaviors, which helped to relieve teacher stress. Additionally, support staff often provided mentoring and coaching support to teachers. Taylor's use of the behavior interventionist and the social worker aligns with the role of support staff in implementing a multi-tiered system of supports that is described in the research literature. Research has shown that in order to achieve consistency in implementing a multi-tiered system of supports for SEL, all staff including social workers and behavior interventionists need to be a part of implementing school-wide SEL programming (Weissberg et al., 2015).

Mental health support. Although teachers received a lot of school leadership support with their students, leadership constantly sought solutions on how to reach students with severe behavioral challenges. Ms. Judy explained:

We did a training at the beginning of the year with someone from Tulane that came in and because we are trying to figure out you know our tough kids, how can we help them, what can we do differently. But the aspect that needed to be addressed is our wellbeing. It takes time to do that with it being after school.

Ms. Judy's comments reflected that Ms. Rogers and the school leadership team were doing everything possible to support teachers with addressing students with severe behavioral needs. Through this training school leadership realized that teachers needed more support with addressing their own wellbeing. However, time seemed to be a major issue in providing adequate support to address teachers' wellbeing. Ms. Rogers elaborated: "Part of the problem is that it's after school. That's the hard part there. Time is an element, though." Ms. Rogers' comments highlighted the need for supporting teachers' emotional wellness and improving their morale when dealing with students who have challenging behavioral issues. Teachers with strong social and emotional competence developed more positive relationships with students and implement SEL more effectively. However, finding the time to address teachers' emotional wellness continued to be a challenge for Taylor. Although implementing *Conscious Discipline* has benefitted the social and emotional competence of teachers, teachers experienced difficulties with challenging student behaviors, which affected their morale. One of the reasons for the difficulties in addressing challenging student behaviors and stress on teacher morale was the lack of mental health services. School staff explained that getting mental health services for children who really need it a major challenge. Consequently, school leadership invested in trainings and meetings with mental health professionals to address students' mental health issues. Ms. Sharon, a fifth grade teacher explained:

We all went into this (training with mental health professionals) gun ho because we thought we were going to learn some new strategies. And it was everything we already do in Conscious Discipline. So, we needed like the next step. Like for the most severe behaviors. 'Really what is the most appropriate thing to do?' And that probably is mental health services...As far as at our end, we have exhausted our options.

Ms. Sharon spoke for the entire staff when she discussed the lack of mental health services for students at Taylor. Her comments suggested that school staff believed that they had followed all of the evidence-based strategies to support students, but they also felt that these students could benefit greatly from mental health services. However, school leadership understood that the challenge with mental health services was a district-wide issue. Ms. Rogers explained that in the past, Taylor had mental health professionals; however, the school district's new verification procedures for working in schools had caused delays in these services.

Summary

The findings presented in Chapter 4 described how one elementary school integrated school-wide SEL into its daily practices. Five emerging themes described the school's process for integrating SEL. The physical and the social environment were key elements of change in the school. Embedding and reinforcing structures, routines, and practices in all micro-contexts of the school facilitated positive adult and student interactions, relationships, and school environment. In addition, the school leadership was critical for planning, leading, and implementing school-wide SEL programming. Through active and visible leadership support, the school principal established a shared vision for school-wide SEL programming and provided staff with the necessary supports for successful implementation through modeling, resources, and ongoing professional development.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter provides an analysis of the findings from this single case study of SEL programming in an elementary school. The purpose of the study was to examine how an elementary school integrated school-wide SEL into its daily practices. A qualitative case study grounded in ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994) provided an in-depth analysis of the school. The findings of this study support contextual understanding of how SEL programs could be delivered effectively while adapting to the contextual needs of schools. Although there is a substantial body of research on the efficacy of SEL programs, the literature review for this study found that there is limited evidence-based guidance on the best ways to integrate SEL into daily school practices. This chapter begins with a summary of the study, and it is followed by the integration of the findings into existing research. Next, the chapter includes the implications for schools, districts, and educational change as well as recommendations for future research. In addition, the delimitations and limitations of the study are addressed. The chapter concludes with closing remarks.

Summary of Findings

The unit of analysis for this study was an elementary school and its approach to school-wide SEL programming. The analysis of data was conducted using categorical aggregation, pattern identification and labeling, direct interpretation, and naturalistic generalizations (Stake, 1995). The data analysis resulted in five themes that answered the research questions by illustrating the process for integrating SEL into the daily practices of an elementary school: (1) routines and shared practices, (2) physical environment of classrooms, (3) common language, (4) school family, and (5) leadership supports for SEL.

Integration of Findings to Existing Research

This study viewed school-wide SEL programming through an ecological lens in which multiple contexts influence the development of SEL skills. School-wide SEL programming typically consists of the adoption of an evidence-based SEL program along with providing school-wide supports through coordinated policies and practices across all contexts within the school, such as the classroom, playground, and hallways (CASEL, 2015; Oberle et al., 2016). The findings of this study highlight several key points in the research literature.

Alignment and consistent, predictable experiences. The school environment is an important context for students' social and emotional development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). According to Hemmelgarn, Glisson, and James (2006), SEL skills develop more effectively across contexts that exhibit alignment and consistent, predictable experiences. Alignment and consistent, predictable experiences were noted in the findings of Theme 1: *Routines and Shared Practices*, Theme 2: *Physical Environment of* classrooms, and Theme 3: *Common Language*. These findings align with the research on school climate and SEL. According to Dusenbury and Weissberg (2017), school climate is “conceptualized to include the physical, academic, social, and disciplinary environment” (p. 2). Moreover, school climate is described as an important factor in creating the conditions for learning, such as “emotional and physical safety, connectedness, support, respect, engagement, challenging opportunities to learn, and interactions with and modeling from socially and emotionally competent adults and peers” (Berg et al., 2017, p. 4).

Physical environment. The findings suggest that the structure of Taylor's physical environment can be characterized as a key component in contributing to creating the conditions for learning. This finding aligns with the research literature on the link between the key factors

of school climate (e.g., physical and emotional safety, connectedness, etc.) and SEL. Therefore, the implication for this study is consistent with research findings in which SEL and school climate are described as “inextricably interrelated and mutually reinforcing” (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017, p. 7). In other words, there is a reciprocal relationship between school climate and SEL. At Taylor Elementary School, the findings suggest that structuring the physical environment created a supportive context in which students’ SEL skills could develop. These structural components included aligned and consistent use of environmental structures, (e.g. *visual routines, the safe place, and the time machine*) to facilitate daily instruction and reinforcement of SEL routines and shared practices as well as to foster a positive school environment. Because the physical environment fostered the use of routines and shared practices that consistently provided predictable experiences for students, students felt emotionally and physically safe. Ms. Judy noted: “I think for kids, especially kids who have anxiety, that's [predictable routines and practice] very helpful because they can see what's going to happen next.” In addition, the findings revealed that the school day was structured, so that students experienced the same daily routine. Hence, Taylor’s students were more likely to develop SEL skills in a school environment that fostered emotional and physical safety by providing clear expectations through consistent, predictable experiences. Overall, the implication for SEL programs is that programs that focus on strategies to improve both the school environment and students’ development of SEL skills could be more effective in increasing positive outcomes (Domitrovich et al., 2017).

Social environment. Because schools represent a complex, nested system of interactions, and relationships in which SEL skills develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994), schools often adopt a common language to teach and reinforce students’ use of SEL skills (Elias, 2010). The

findings in Theme 3: *Common Language* also emphasized aligned and consistent, predictable experiences. Another key point from the research literature is that the use of a common language throughout the school supports whole school change by conveying positive school norms that contribute to a sense of community (Cervone & Cushman, 2014; Oberle et al., 2016). Hence, this finding consisted of interactions related to structuring the social environment. Having a common language that was consistently used by all adults in the school was particularly valuable in micro-contexts, such as the playground and hallways. Such micro-contexts are often less supervised and identified by students as places where they feel unsafe (Astor et al., 2001; LaRusso, Brown, Jones, & Aber, 2009), which suggest a need for schools to increase supervision and prevention strategies especially according to location and times of increased student body in non-classroom settings (Cash et al., 2014). Ms. Lisa explained: “Recess is huge, especially that language. That’s where we do our most un-official teaching and that’s where the students get to practice their skills.” Thus, this finding is aligned with current scholarly recommendations that advocate a whole school approach as necessary in order to promote SEL skills that are sustainable beyond the classroom (Oberle et al., 2016).

The findings also revealed a common language for SEL was communicated through three major competencies: self-regulation, making connections, and problem solving. These are reflected respectively in CASEL’s SEL framework as self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. CASEL’s SEL framework is organized by “five core competencies— self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making” (Kress & Elias, 2006, p. 594). Although the school included CASEL’s competencies, the main goals of their SEL programming were more aligned to Jones' and Bailey’s (2016) framework that consisted of three core competencies, including *cognitive regulation*—the ability

to solve problems and focus attention; *emotional processes*—the ability to control, express, and understand emotions; and *interpersonal skills*—the ability to have positive interactions.

Nevertheless, both frameworks have key conceptual elements embedded in them (Osher et al., 2016). However, having varied frameworks suggest that aligning SEL frameworks could be beneficial for providing guidance to schools and the development of SEL programs.

Consequently, the use of a common language was a critical component of school-wide SEL programming because it promoted positive interactions that influenced students learning of SEL skills. The findings in Theme 4: *School Family* exemplify how positive interactions promoted a positive school environment. A characteristic of these interactions is bi-directionality in which not only were students influenced; but students influenced the environment as well, which promoted a positive school environment and a healthy “school family” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). Because these interactions were consistent and enduring, they served as proximal processes that supported the social and emotional development of students. Proximal processes are progressively complex reciprocal interactions between a person and his or her environment, which “must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time” (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 620). Based on whether the interaction is positive or negative, proximal processes can impede or nurture the positive development of students. In this case study, the interactions were positive. The positive impact of high-quality interactions on the school environment has been cited frequently in the research literature. For example, Brown and colleagues examined the impact of an SEL and literacy intervention on the quality of classroom processes on the social and emotional climate of the classrooms. Brown and colleagues found that the SEL and literacy intervention classrooms were rated as significantly higher in quality when compared to the control schools (Brown et al., 2010). The ratings reflected the degree to

which teachers' interactions with students were warm and supportive, lacked anger and hostility, and included consistent teacher responses to the needs of students as well as teachers integrating students' ideas and interests into learning activities. Creating a positive school environment through high-quality interactions is an effective practice because high-quality relationships produce higher student academic achievement and social and emotional competence, while poor interactions are connected to low academic achievement (Baker, 2006; Ladd & Burgess, 2001, Thapa, Cohen, Higgins, & Guffey, 2012; Theodore, 2015). Collectively, these findings suggest that alignment and consistency were the key ingredients in effectively facilitating routines and practices as well as creating the conditions for a caring, safe, and supportive school family (Bouffard, 2014; Berg et al., 2017).

Active and visible leadership support. Because SEL research often cites the use of numerous programs by schools as one of the reasons for fragmented implementation of SEL programs, a particular focus on the Taylor's integration of three SEL programs, *Bucket Filling*, *Conscious Discipline*, and the *Leader in Me* is necessary (Greenberg, 2003; Stoiber, 2011). In order to advance a more comprehensive approach in schools, SEL scholars have expressed the need for schools to have evidence-based guidance on combining, adapting, and integrating existing programs (Weissberg et al., 2015). The findings in Theme 5: *Leadership Supports for SEL* illustrated that the school principal played an active and visible role in school-wide SEL programming. For example, *Conscious Discipline* was the overarching program while the other two programs were integrated into the structures of this program. During morning assembly, the school principal modeled the SEL routines of *Conscious Discipline*, but also included the language of *Bucket Filling* and the *Leader in Me*. Through modeling, the principal demonstrated that school-wide SEL programming was a priority by "walking the talk" (Berkowitz, 2011). Ms.

Rogers, school principal, explained: “My thing is the reason why I actually decided to start school-wide is because I felt like I needed to walk the walk. I needed to show staff.” According to Minckler (2014), school leaders shape the school community through aligned and consistent use of actions, attitudes, and words. These findings are also aligned with Senge’s (1990) learning organization in which school leaders promote learning.

Consequently, the findings in Theme 5: *Leadership Supports for SEL* revealed that leadership is a critical component of school-wide SEL programming. This finding is aligned with research that found leadership was second only to the quality of instruction in school learning (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The findings in this study identified leadership actions that are aligned with whole school change efforts. Key leadership actions of the school principal included articulating a shared vision for SEL, providing ongoing supports for school-wide SEL programming, modeling caring behaviors, and promoting a positive school environment. As a result, school staff were actively engaged in promoting school-wide SEL programming. As the school leader, the principal is responsible for leading whole school SEL change efforts by providing professional development and ongoing support for school-wide SEL programming (Osher et al., 2016). Research studies have confirmed that professional development supports high-quality implementation of SEL programming and increases the amount of practice and reinforcement that students receive, which increases the likelihood of positive social and emotional and academic outcomes (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Oberle et al., 2016; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012).

While ongoing professional development to develop competence with teaching SEL is necessary, principals, teachers, and staff also need professional development and support to develop their own social and emotional competence (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). The findings

revealed that the principal also attended to teachers' social and emotional competence through trainings from a mental health professional. Research shows that many factors contribute to teachers' stress, such as student behavioral problems and teacher social and emotional competence (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016). Moreover, greater stress and symptoms of depression in elementary teachers contribute to negative classroom environments, which decreases learning (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). Although teachers received training to build their social emotional competence, severe behaviors impacted the wellbeing and mental health of the teachers. The school appeared to be addressing all of the factors or indicators that an effective SEL program, according to research, should contain; however, what they found was that the mental health piece was lacking. In addition, teachers were also stressed by demands of the accountability even though the principal encouraged teachers to focus on what is best for children. In this way, the principal was buffering teachers from district initiatives, which illustrated the principal's transformative practices to improve SEL (Nedelcu, 2013).

The findings in Theme 5 revealed that the school principal also provided ongoing supports for school-wide SEL programming by collaborating with the school social worker and the behavior interventionists to provide additional supports to teachers and students. Research has affirmed that a collaborative effort that includes all staff and mental health professionals is necessary in order to create consistency and implement a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) for SEL (Weissberg et al., 2015). MTSS is a crucial part of school-wide SEL programming (Weissberg et al., 2015). Although research studies have highlighted the positive outcomes of MTSS, including practices such as collaborating with school mental health professionals to provide intervention services, assessments, progress monitoring, training, and on-going support (Albrecht et al., 2015), MTSS was not found to be a critical element of

Taylor's school-wide SEL programming. However, the findings indicated that Taylor did not implement MTSS for SEL because they lacked many of effective components of MTSS, such as intervention support from mental health professionals, screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring, and tiered systems of support.

Transformative leadership practices. Elias, O'Brien, and Weissberg (2006) suggest that in order to accomplish the kinds of changes described in this study, transformative leadership practices are necessary. Although there are several aspects of transformative leadership, the school's principal role in this study as a visionary and courageous leader stands out in an era in which efforts to raise student achievement solely through academics persists. This finding was especially represented through the principal's advocacy for students and teachers. For example, the school principal advocated for the school's vision regarding making the best decisions for the students. Another key finding sheds light on the role of school leadership in building relational trust. Ms. Amy, the third-grade teacher, elaborated: "Our administration believes in us and is willing to let us try things." School leadership demonstrated a belief in teachers by being open to and accepting suggestions as well as encouraging solutions to problems. School leadership encouraged the use of evidence-based practices for decision-making by using evidence-based practices. For example, staff mirrored the school principal by consulting the research before implementing a practice, such as flexible seating. As a result, the culture of the school was that evidence-based research guides their decision making. Ms. Lisa shared: "She definitely encourages us to think outside the box." The school principal inspired and motivated staff to do the significant work of school-wide SEL programming. The findings of this study aligned with Bryk's (2010) research in which he found that trust promotes professional capacity and facilitates a student-centered environment. Bryk (2010) also discussed that leadership uses

power effectively to create whole school change. At Taylor, the findings revealed that power was distributed among staff through collaborative structures, such as the school leadership team and leadership team meetings. Such shared leadership support of the school administrator and a core leadership team is a significant factor in effective school-wide SEL programming (Elias & Kamarinos, 2004). Similarly, power was also distributed between the staff and the students through student-centered discipline practices. In this way, the principal actively modeled expectations for teaching students. Student-centered discipline is one of ten and frequently found SEL instructional practices (Yoder, 2014). The findings in this study are aligned with student-centered discipline through school-wide practices, such as *visual routines* (collaborative norms); *the safe place* (calming places); *S.T.A.R.* (breathing strategies); and *time machine* (conflict resolution). Although the principal did not lead through an authoritative leadership style, she possessed what is perceived as authoritative power because she was the one who made the final decision. However, the implication for school-wide SEL programming is that in order to achieve implementation fidelity, buy-in, and positive student outcomes, then all stakeholders need to be on board. It is important to invite all stakeholders to the table.

School-wide SEL programming. Current scholarly thought on integrating SEL promotes the use of a school-wide approach that includes SEL programs and school-wide supports through coordinated policies and practices across all contexts within the school, such as the classroom, playground, and hallways (CASEL, 2015; Oberle et al., 2016). The final point situates this study in two areas. First, a study is in progress to develop strategies using the analogy of kernels, which are the active ingredients of SEL programs that are known to be effective (Jones et al., 2017). For example, a kernel at Taylor would be the breathing technique S.T.A.R. According to Jones and her colleagues, schools would be able to customize these

kernels to meet their contextual needs and easily implement them across school contexts.

Although *Conscious Discipline* consists of teaching SEL concepts through stories, structured lessons are not the major focus of this program; rather, similar to kernels, the teaching of SEL was done through daily routines and strategies that were applied across contexts throughout the day. Utilizing routines and strategies, staff had flexibility in how SEL was implemented as well as opportunities to integrate other SEL programs. This finding aligns with Jones and colleagues' research (Jones et al., 2017; in developing kernels in which schools can select strategies to meet their contextual needs.

Second, the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development's (SEAD) 2017 convening provided several key take-aways from site visits of SEL schools in Cleveland. Although all of the take-aways resonate with this study, there are two take-aways that especially aligned with this study. The first take-away included intentionally integrating SEL in stages, which created the conditions and the time to develop the right environment for promoting SEL. In a similar manner, Taylor Elementary School utilized scaffolding and sequencing to integrate SEL, which began with the principal modeling SEL routines during *morning assembly* and introducing new strategies gradually over time. The process of gradual implementation created small-wins for successful implementation. Gradual implementation provided Taylor's teachers with time to practice and learn new strategies. In addition, the school was provided with time to build the environment and supports necessary to implement SEL. Another key take-away was the acknowledgement that integrating SEL is a significant task because schools have limited resources and increasing demands on time. The findings of this study revealed that funding was an issue as well as finding time to continue the varied types of professional development, such as training to support teachers' social and emotional competence

and attend summer institutes. In light of these take-aways from the Cleveland Public Schools, this study presents some important implications for schools, districts, and educational change.

Implications for Schools

This study presents several implications for schools on integrating school-wide SEL programming in schools. The findings suggest that attending to school climate is a critical component for supporting students' development of SEL skills. For example, the use of environmental structures in the school, such as *visual routines*, provided the infrastructure for supporting students' development of SEL skills by communicating clear expectations. Having clear expectations also fostered safety and a positive school environment. Because students' need physical and emotional safety to learn, creating a positive environment is necessary in order for students to develop SEL skills (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017). Hence, school climate created the conditions for nurturing students' development of SEL skills. School climate and SEL mutually reinforced each other (Berg et al., 2017). The development of students' social and emotional competence increased the likelihood of their ability to contribute to a positive school climate. The school environment should foster aligned and consistent, predictable experiences in order to teach and reinforce clear and high expectations to support the development of students' SEL skills. Because the school utilized aligned and consistent, predictable experiences throughout the school day, students received ample dosage of the school's communication of clear expectations. The expectations should be student-centered. For example, students and teachers often established expectations for managing behavior, which provided students with a sense of ownership and an increase likelihood of following expectations. Such student-centered discipline practices can be defined as "norming" SEL. According to Bisson (2018), "norms are the foundation of school and classroom management and culture" (p. 2). Based on their context,

schools should invest in creating norms that are collaboratively established with students in the school and in the classroom and are taught explicitly by modeling, practicing, and revisiting when students need support.

In addition to the physical environment of the school, the social environment also plays an important role in developing a positive school climate and supporting students' social and emotional development. The use of a common language for communicating SEL contributed to a positive school environment by conveying positive school norms (Oberle et al., 2016).

Because all staff consistently used a common language, students were immersed in SEL and provided ample opportunities for reinforcement and practice, which enabled students to have the ability to apply SEL skills. The use of a common language also provided students with plenty of opportunities to engage in positive interactions (i.e., student-to-student and adult-student) that enabled them to learn how to make connections and build positive relationships. Relationships promoted a positive environment and were fostered in various ways at the school, such as classroom buddies, morning assembly, morning circle, team building, and service learning. The findings suggest that these kinds of activities support students in establishing relationships. Relationships provide students with a sense of belonging in school, which fosters their engagement in school and helps them to feel connected to school staff and teachers (Berg et al., 2017). When students feel connected, they are more likely to be able to accept feedback and be more open or willing to learn (Weissberg, Bouffard, & Jones, 2013).

Leadership is a critical component of successful school-wide SEL programming (CASEL, 2008). The school principal actively committed to making SEL a priority by engaging in key actions, such as modeling caring behavior, promoting a positive school climate, and providing ongoing supports, such as professional development. Promoting a positive

environment is one of the ways that the school principal influenced students' learning of SEL skills. In a study on how principal's influence student learning, Allensworth and Hart (2018) found that principals who promoted a strong school climate had the highest improvements in learning. The implications of their study contribute greatly to understanding the principal's role in promoting a positive school climate and SEL. Through effectively creating and supporting shared leadership around a shared vision and school-wide goals for SEL, the principal created a positive school climate in which all members of the school could be successful.

Implications for School Districts

This study presents several implications for districts on integrating school-wide SEL programming in schools. The findings suggest that the active engagement and commitment of the school principal was a critical component of school-wide SEL programming. Similarly, school districts can support schools through strong leadership commitment and support for SEL. When SEL is a priority at the district level, all district staff and stakeholders, including the superintendent and school board, should be involved. Research on the CASEL's Collaborative District Initiative (CDI) illustrated how school districts integrated SEL into every facet of the district, such as their strategic plans, academics, professional development, and policies on hiring and discipline (CASEL, 2017). The CDI is a partnership between CASEL and several school districts to effectively integrate SEL. The findings of this study suggest that school districts can support schools in several ways. For example, districts can support schools with integrating SEL into core academic subjects. Since integrating academics and SEL have been shown to significantly improve students' outcomes in academics, career, and life (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017), schools need support in creating a strong curriculum that addresses social and emotional learning. District curriculum coordinators could provide professional

development on integrating SEL and core academic subjects. The findings suggest that the school implemented PBIS and SEL by negotiating issues with alignment. School districts could support schools by establishing and integrating SEL into a district-wide multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) (Weissberg et al., 2015; WestEd, 2015). Districts could support intervention services through collaboration with mental health professionals. On the other hand, both teachers and principals need support for their own social and emotional competence in order to promote positive student development (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Districts can help schools by providing professional development to support the social and emotional competence. Such professional development could include educators reflecting on their own social and emotional competence by identifying areas of strength and prioritizing areas needing growth (CASEL, 2017).

Districts should also take into account that school context matters (Anyon, 2016). School districts could support schools by conducting needs assessments in order to identify strengths and needs. Utilizing focus groups and surveys has helped school districts to develop inclusive training for teachers and principals, identify quality of implementation in schools, and scale up best practices (CASEL, 2017). Similar to CASEL's CDI, school districts could develop a consortium of schools who are interested in implementing school-wide SEL or schools who are implementing SEL at various levels of implementations. Rather than creating a district-wide mandate for SEL, districts could begin to gradually build pockets of successful implementation.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that gradual implementation of school-wide SEL is necessary in order to build the necessary school climate conditions and to provide staff with time to learn and practice. Gradual implementation was also a finding from observations of public schools implementing SEL in Cleveland (SEAD, 2017). School districts should provide schools

with the time that is necessary to gradually integrate school-wide SEL before measuring outcomes. The findings in this study revealed that it took seven years before the school was functioning as a high-performer. Because each school has unique needs, districts should accept multiple pathways for successful implementation (CASEL, 2017).

Implications for Educational Change

This study raises several implications for educational change. The findings suggest that the school utilized a school-wide SEL approach that included routines and strategies, rather than a structured curricula approach. Although these routines and strategies were key ingredients of school-wide SEL, a school cannot adopt the routines and strategies described in this study and expect successfully school-wide SEL programming. Ely (1990) suggests that the environment in which a change effort is implemented can be a factor in whether or not the effort is successful. He also provides key insights on the necessary conditions for change to facilitate adoption of change efforts, such as leadership, commitment, time, participation, resources, and knowledge and skills (Ely, 1990). There are several characteristics of this study that reflect the conditions for change that were necessary to facilitate successful implementation. For example, school leadership was evident as well as a critical factor of school-wide SEL programming. Both the school principal and the staff were committed to promoting school-wide SEL. Staff were encouraged and expected to play an active role in promoting SEL through the organization and management of shared leadership roles. School leadership provided ongoing supports through resources and professional development that provided the knowledge and skills necessary for staff to learn how to teach and reinforce SEL. Moreover, teachers were given time to learn through gradual implementation of SEL routines and practices. Once teachers became more knowledgeable, they were able to integrate other SEL practices. The school was highly

motivated to implement SEL because they were not pleased with their school environment and their progress in supporting students' social and emotional development. As a result, school staff were willing to take this journey in order to improve the school and support students' social and emotional development. Therefore, it takes a comprehensive approach to implementing school-wide SEL, one in which SEL serves as a framework for both prevention and intervention.

Recommendations for Future Research

Possibilities exist for expanding this study. Future research could include multiple case studies of elementary schools in order to continue to identify a clear vision of what integrated implementation looks like in various contexts. Research on evaluating the school-wide SEL programming is needed in order to understand the effects on school climate. The school's SEL goals focused on three major competencies: self-regulation, making connections, and problem-solving. Gathering staff and students' perceptions of how these competencies promoted students' SEL skills and fostered a positive climate could add to the literature on the intersection of school climate and SEL.

Since many schools use PBIS, further study is needed on schools' integration of PBIS and SEL. Research should study the efficacy of such an approach. School leadership was a critical component of school-wide SEL programming. The role of school leadership warrants further research study. In particular, what are the critical characteristics of school leaders who lead school-wide SEL efforts. Understanding these characteristics could support preparation for school leaders and leadership coaching.

Schools are influenced by other systems, such as families and communities. Further study could include the role of the school, family, and community partnerships in influencing students' SEL skills. Finally, sustainability of SEL programs is necessary for promoting long-term

benefits. A follow-up study could be conducted to learn about factors' that reduced and contributed to sustainability.

Delimitations of the Study

This study examined an elementary school's efforts to integrate school-wide SEL programming in classrooms and micro-contexts such as hallways, lunchrooms, playgrounds, and gymnasiums; however, only the school setting of an elementary school as a microsystem was analyzed. In addition, an elementary school that was a high performer of SEL was the focus of this case study. The school that was selected had the following characteristics: (a) commitment to making SEL a priority by creating a safe, supportive, and engaging environment that promotes SEL; (b) full integration of SEL into daily school practices and interactions; (c) professional development and support; (d) coordination of SEL into academic instruction and existing programs and connects and extend classroom learning into other school-micro-contexts (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Other systems that influence the school were not examined. For example, the school's role in building partnerships with families and the community was not examined in this study.

Limitations

This study represents one particular elementary school's approach to school-wide SEL programming, which was conducted during one period of time. Thus, the selection of one elementary school limits the ability to make generalizations. For future studies, a multiple case study in which the number of elementary schools are increased could add more confidence to generalizability. Utilizing a single case study has limitations because school contexts vary. Other elementary schools may not be able to successfully adapt findings to their school mission and needs. What works for one school context may not work for other schools who have

different contexts. Schools are very complex systems. Although ecological systems theory served as a useful theoretical framework, other theories, such as social learning theory or relational-cultural theory, could have also facilitated the process of data collection and analysis of an elementary school setting. Although every attempt was made through a carefully designed study to fully validate the findings, the study was conducted during one period of time over eight weeks. A future study could be conducted at two different periods of time. However, the researcher remains confident in the findings of this study.

Concluding Remarks

In closing, there are many lessons learned from an in-depth study of school-wide SEL programming in an elementary school. The first lesson is an overwhelming impression and appreciation for the significant work of school-wide SEL programming. Schools can contribute greatly to promoting students' development of SEL skills, but it takes time to implement well. Although schools serve as natural contexts for promoting students' social and emotional development, they are influenced by other systems in which they need support, such as from families, communities, districts, etc. The purpose of this study was to examine how an elementary school integrated school-wide SEL programming into its daily practices. Hoping to support educators with improving practices in schools, this study provided a rich narrative of what integrated school-wide SEL programming looked like in one particular elementary school. A school's environment can be transformative. In order for learning to occur, attention should be given to the conditions of learning and the school environment. Through aligned and consistent practices that created predictable experiences consisting of structures, routines, and interactions, Taylor Elementary School created the conditions for nurturing students social and emotional development. In addition, through transformative leadership practices, school

leadership provided a shared vision for SEL, and active and visible, ongoing supports to engage all staff in promoting SEL. Thus, a student-centered learning environment was created in which students felt a sense of safety, belonging, and family. The ecological model served as a useful framework for understanding how enhancing environments and relationships can support the development of all members of the school. In this way, there is synergy between the environment and social and emotional learning to create the necessary conditions for promoting positive development of student.

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Appendix A

Note: A score over the threshold of three is acceptable.

School Selection Criteria: Innovation Configuration for An Appropriate School-wide SEL Approach

5	4	3	2	1
Fully functional level of development and implementation	Mostly functional level of development and implementation	Functional Development	Limited development or partial implementation	No development and implementation
<p>The school regularly implements social and emotional concepts and strategies into all areas and functions of the school, including curricular, extra-curricular, and student support services.</p> <p>There is consistent use of SEL concepts and strategies in adult and student interactions.</p> <p>School offers regular professional development to all staff, including support staff (e.g., book groups, SEL workshops); teachers are regularly given opportunities to collaborate on SEL planning and activities (e.g., grade-level team meetings dedicated to discussion of SEL); school offers ongoing opportunities for SEL coaching and feedback.</p>	<p>The school is integrating SEL concepts only into all academic areas; the school frequently incorporates SEL Concepts and strategies into school supports and activities.</p> <p>There is frequent use of SEL concepts and strategies in adult and student interactions.</p> <p>School offers regular professional development to all staff, including support staff (e.g., book groups, SEL workshops); teachers are regularly given opportunities to collaborate on SEL planning and activities (e.g., grade-level team meetings dedicated to discussion of SEL).</p>	<p>The school is integrating SEL concepts only into all academic areas; the school is beginning to plan how to incorporate SEL concepts and strategies into school supports and activities.</p> <p>There is some attempt to use of SEL concepts and strategies in adult and student interactions.</p> <p>School offers regular professional development to all staff, including support staff (e.g., book groups, SEL workshops).</p>	<p>The school does not expand SEL beyond the scope of the evidence-based classroom program; there is no indication that the school is working to explore connections between SEL and all other school activities (e.g., core, academic classes, student support services, and extra-curricular activities).</p> <p>There is little to no use of SEL concepts and strategies in adults and student interactions.</p> <p>There is minimal professional development for staff above and beyond evidence-based program (e.g., SEL is occasionally included as part of staff meetings, teachers receive articles/ SEL readings once in a while, professional development on SEL is offered once a year as part of an in-service day).</p>	<p>The school's SEL program only focuses on following school rules and rewards.</p> <p>There is no use of SEL concepts and strategies in adults and interactions.</p> <p>There is no plan for professional development related to evidence-based SEL program.</p>

Note. From "Sustainable schoolwide social and emotional learning (SEL): Implementation guide and toolkit," by E. Devaney, M. O'Brien, H. Resnik, S. Keister, & R. Weissberg, (2006). Copyright 2006 by The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix B: School Selection Principal Interview Protocol

Promoting Positive Student Development: A qualitative case study of school-wide social and emotional learning in an elementary school

School Selection* Principal Interview Protocol

**Note: Based on the scores on the IC, all schools that score over a threshold of three out of five on the IC will be considered as possible participants. This interview serves as an additional screening to determine the final selection of the school site.*

Introduction

Good morning (afternoon). Thank you for taking the time today to talk with me. As you know from our earlier meeting my name is Kathleen Theodore and I am a doctoral student at the University of New Orleans in Educational Leadership. As part of fulfilling the requirements for my doctorate in Educational Leadership, I am interested in studying how social and emotional learning is integrated into an elementary school.

The purpose of this interview is to facilitate the selection of a school site. So, the questions will focus on describing your program for teaching and supporting social and emotional learning. This interview will last no more than 30 minutes. There are no right, or wrong, or desirable, or undesirable answers. I will not be recording this interview; however, I will be jotting down some notes to help me remember. Everything we discuss will be confidential. This is strictly voluntary; so please feel free to stop at any time. Before we begin, let's take a brief moment to review and sign the consent form.

Date:		Time:	
Interviewee:		Role or Position:	
Location:			

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
Background	
I. How long have you been in your current professional position?	
a. <i>Follow-up question: How long have you been at this school?</i>	
b. <i>Follow-up: What are some of your past professional positions in education?</i>	

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
Vision (Research Question No. 1, 2, 3)	
2. How do you envision social and emotional learning impacting students at this school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Listen for school's SEL policies and practices.</i>
<p><i>a. Probing question: What are your expectations for teachers and staff?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Listen for what social and emotional (SEL) programming looks like in this school.</i> • <i>Does the principal note the five core competencies of SEL?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Self-awareness,</i> ○ <i>Self-management,</i> ○ <i>Social awareness,</i> ○ <i>Relationship skills,</i> ○ <i>Responsible decision-making</i> • <i>How are the core competencies taught?</i>
Leadership: In the last set of questions, we will discuss leadership and support for social and emotional learning.	
3. What is your role in facilitating the development of students' social and emotional learning skills?	
4. Do you have a school leadership team?	
<p><i>a. Follow-up question: If so, who makes up the campus' school leadership?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Listen for whether school has an SLT. If no SLT, ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Do you have staff members that assist with implementing SEL?</i> ○ <i>What are your plans to develop leaders in this area?</i>
<p><i>b. Follow-up question: What is the school leadership team's role in supporting SEL?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Listen for activities related to assisting with planning and facilitating implementation (e.g., creating shared vision, conducting needs assessment, developing strategic plan, selecting evidence-based SEL programming, etc.).</i>
<p><i>c. Follow-up question: How do you support the school leadership team in promoting SEL?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Listen for:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Champion/cheerleader of school leadership team and SEL programming</i> ○ <i>Provide financial resources for SEL programming</i> ○ <i>Provide designated time for SEL programming</i> ○ <i>Provide space for SEL programming</i>
Support	
5. Do all staff receive professional development on social and emotional learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Listen for all educators and staff in the school.</i>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
<p><i>a. Follow up question: If so, what kinds of professional development did staff receive to</i></p>	
<p>Final Thoughts: Thank you for sharing how your school integrates school-wide social and emotional programming into its daily practices</p>	
<p>6. Is there anything else that you would like to add?</p>	
<p><i>Thank interviewee for participation and time and discuss possible ways to follow-up.</i></p>	

Appendix C

Sample Schedule for Data Collection

Data collection methods and analysis will include reflexive journaling, transcription of field notes for thematic coding, and content analysis.

Data Collection Method		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Classroom Observation	30-minute classroom observations (1 teacher per grade level)	→							
	1 hour observation of school principal	→							
	30-minute observation of school micro-context (Arrival/Morning)		→			→			
	30-minute observation of school micro-context (Morning/Midday)		→			→			
	30-minute observation of school micro-context (Midday/Afternoon)		→			→			
	30-minute observation of school micro-context (Afternoon/Dismissal)		→			→			
Semi-structured Interviews	60-minute semi-structured interviews (1 teacher per grade level)					→			
	60-minute semi-structured interview with the school principal						→		
	60-minute semi-structured interview with each member of the school leadership team							→	
Focus Groups	60-minute semi-structured Teacher Focus Group								→
	60-minute semi-structured interview with school leadership team								→

Appendix D: Observation Protocol

Date:	Location:	Activity:
File Name:	Length:	Coding Date:

Focus: Instructional Practices (Yoder, 2014)	Specific Instances	What/How Connected to SEL
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student-centered Discipline 2. Teacher Language 3. Responsibility and Choice 4. Warmth and Support 5. Cooperative Learning 6. Classroom Discussions 7. Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment 8. Balanced Instruction 9. Academic Press and Expectations 10. Competence Building— Modeling, Practice, Feedback, Coaching 		

Appendix D: Observation Protocol (Cont'd)

Sketch of Area

Appendix E: Principal Interview Protocol

**Promoting Positive Student Development:
A qualitative case study of school-wide social and emotional learning in an elementary school**

Principal Interview Protocol

Introduction

Good morning (afternoon). Thank you for taking the time today to talk with me. As you know from our earlier meeting my name is Kathleen Theodore and I am a doctoral student at the University of New Orleans in Educational Leadership. As part of fulfilling the requirements for my doctorate in Educational Leadership, I am interested in studying how social and emotional learning is integrated into an elementary school.

The purpose of this interview is to understand how your school implements school-wide social and emotional learning. So, the questions will focus on describing school-wide practices and support for social and emotional learning. This interview will last no more than 60 minutes. There are no right, or wrong, or desirable, or undesirable answers. To facilitate my note-taking, I will be recording this interview. I am the sole researcher on this project who access to the recordings, which will be completely deleted after they are transcribed. Everything we discuss will be confidential. This is strictly voluntary; so please feel free to stop at any time. Before we begin, let's take a brief moment to review and sign the consent form. Reread information on document and ensure participant consent.

Date:		Time:	
Interviewee:		Role or Position:	
Location:			

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
Perception of Social and Emotional Learning	
7. What does social and emotional learning mean to you?	
<i>a. Probing question: How do you think it benefits students? School staff? Schools</i>	
8. Why did your school decide to implement social and emotional learning?	
Program Selection	

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
9. Describe the process for selecting and implementing school-wide social and emotional learning program.	<p><i>Listen for, if not heard ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: What did the process look like?</i> • <i>Probing question: Who was involved in the process?</i> • <i>Probing question: What were some critical decisions?</i> • <i>Probing question: What was particularly difficult during the process?</i>
10. Why did you select _____ (social and emotional learning program, approach, etc.)?	<i>Listen for evidence-based reasons.</i>
a. <i>Follow-up question: How did you come to consensus on SEL program and approach?</i>	<i>Listen for having a shared vision on what social and emotional competence means for students as well as what is necessary to meet students' SEL needs.</i>
b. <i>Follow-up question: Why did the school decide to implement a school-wide social and emotional learning approach instead of a classroom only approach?</i>	<i>Listen for evidence-based reasons, such as the likelihood of achieving the most successful outcomes.</i>
11. How was buy-in achieved with staff?	<p><i>Listen for creating a shared vision and perception of importance by staff. If not heard, ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: What is the role or expectation for all staff in promoting social and emotional learning?</i>
Integrated School-wide SEL Programming	
12. What are the components of _____ (SEL program or approach)?	
a. Follow-up question: Describe what _____ (SEL program or approach) looks like on a daily basis in this school, from the time students arrive to dismissal time.	<i>Listen for: coordination of components for integrated school-wide SEL practices with opportunities for students to learn and apply SEL skills in every setting (classroom, cafeteria, playground, et.) of the school</i>
b. Follow-up question: What do you think are the most critical aspects of the school-wide social and emotional approach? Why?	<p><i>Listen for, if not heard ask for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Are there any components that have been omitted or adapted?</i> • <i>Probing question: If so, ask why. How was the decision made to omit or adapt a component?</i>
Support	
13. What are some examples of professional development and support that is provided to staff?	

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
<p><i>b. Follow-up question: Why were these types of professional development and support selected?</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for: Building social and emotional competence among staff (e.g., their ability to cope, manage stress, emotional intelligence). If not shared ask, if PD and support is focused on staff's social and emotional competence.</i></p>
<p><i>c. Follow up question: How do you determine if the support is meeting the needs of staff?</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for comprehensive assessments of classrooms and school environment to support students' development of SEL skills.</i></p>
<p><i>d. Follow-up question: Are there any opportunities in which staff are engaged in reflection activities? If so, please provide some examples.</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for: modeling reflection actions, building reflections into meetings and supervision, encouraging staff to take time for reflection, etc.</i></p>
<p>Integrated School-wide SEL Programming and Other School-wide Practices</p>	
<p><i>8. Are there any other practices geared to promote social and emotional learning?</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for SEL integration into the core functioning of the school, such as policies, practices, and structures (e.g., multi-tier system of supports).</i></p>
<p><i>a. Follow-up question: How do the activities promote social and emotional learning?</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for reinforcement and application of SEL core competencies.</i></p>
<p><i>b. Follow-up question: How is social and emotional learning aligned or integrated into students support services? For example, the work of the school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, etc.</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for small group work, and intervention services to reinforce and supplement classroom instruction.</i></p>
<p><i>c. Follow-up question: Please describe what the development process was like.</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for a process that included examining school needs and resources and considering what is needed at the student, classroom, and school levels.</i></p>
<p><i>9. Since the school-wide adoption of SEL programming, has the school developed or adopted other school-wide practices? If so, was this the result of SEL programming? If yes, how so?</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for the influence of SEL on developing innovative school-wide practices, such as how SEL is embedded into interactions, daily routines, and structures.</i></p>
<p><i>a. Follow-up question: If yes, is there evidence to suggest these practices build positive relationships? If so, please describe</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for: Evidence associated with high-quality interactions, caring, and trusting relationships among staff, between staff and students, and between students.</i></p>
<p><i>b. Follow-up question: What was your role in supporting the development of school-wide practices?</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for clear and visible support in which the principal was actively engaged and committed to transforming school and infrastructure to support an integrated school-wide SEL approach.</i></p>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
10. What are some practices that have been developed to promote a positive school environment?	<i>Listen for: Practices, policies, and structures associated with high-quality interactions, caring, and trusting relationships among staff, between staff and students, and between students.</i>
a. <i>Follow-up question: How do discipline policies align with the social and emotional learning?</i>	<i>Listen for: positive discipline policies (e.g., restorative discipline.)</i>
b. <i>Follow-up question: How do bullying prevention practices align with social and emotional learning?</i>	<i>Listen for: anti-bullying prevention guidelines, school norms, values, policies, etc..</i>
c. <i>Follow-up question: What is your role in promoting a positive school environment?</i>	<i>Listen for: Modeling caring and moral behavior; positive leadership, providing ongoing professional development, building emotional awareness of staff and self, etc.</i>
Lessons Learned and Final Thoughts	
11. What have you learned from implementing school-wide social and emotional learning?	
a. <i>Follow-up question: Describe one of your most successful experiences?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Why was it successful?</i>
b. <i>Follow-up question: What has been your biggest challenge with implementing social and emotional learning?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Is it resolved? If so, how? If not, how do you plan to resolve it?</i>
12. How do you measure success?	<i>Listen for cycles of inquiry to facilitate continuous improvement (i.e., reflect on data used to monitor SEL implementation).</i>
13. What are your next steps for SEL implementation?	<i>Listen for cycles of inquiry to facilitate continuous improvement.</i>
14. Where do you see SEL implementation in 5 years? Why?	<i>Listen for cycles of inquiry to facilitate continuous improvement.</i>
15. Finally, what advice can you share with an elementary school principal who is just beginning a school-wide social and emotional learning approach?	
<i>Thank interviewee for participation and time and discuss possible ways to follow-up.</i>	

Appendix F: Teacher Interview Protocol

**Promoting Positive Student Development:
A qualitative case study of school-wide social and emotional learning in an elementary school**

Teacher Interview Protocol

Introduction

Good morning (afternoon). Thank you for taking the time today to talk with me. As you know from our earlier meeting my name is Kathleen Theodore and I am a doctoral student at the University of New Orleans in Educational Leadership. As part of fulfilling the requirements for my doctorate in Educational Leadership, I am studying how social and emotional learning is integrated into an elementary school.

The purpose of this interview is to learn about social and emotional learning practices in your classroom. So, the questions will focus on describing classroom practices and strategies that support social and emotional learning. This interview will last no more than 60 minutes. There are no right, or wrong, or desirable, or undesirable answers. To facilitate my note-taking, I will be recording this interview. I am the sole researcher on this project who access to the recordings, which will be completely deleted after they are transcribed. Everything we discuss will be confidential. This is strictly voluntary; so please feel free to stop at any time. Before we begin, let’s take a brief moment to review and sign the consent form. Reread information on document and ensure participant consent.

Date:		Time:	
Interviewees		Role or Position	
Location:			

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
Background	
1. How many years have you been teaching?	
<i>a. Follow-up question: How long have you been at this school?</i>	
<i>b. Follow-up question: Have you taught at any other schools?</i>	
2. What factors influenced your decision to teach at this school	
<i>a. Rapport with staff at the school</i>	

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. <i>Geographic location of the school</i> c. <i>School climate and culture</i> d. <i>Social and Emotional Learning approach and/or practices</i> e. <i>Professional development resources at the school</i> f. <i>Opportunities to advance in my teaching profession at the school</i> g. <i>Opportunities to improve instructional practices at the school</i> h. <i>Opportunities to work with student population at the school</i> i. <i>Other [please specify]</i> 	
Integrated School-wide SEL Programming	
<p>3. What does social and emotional learning mean to you?</p>	
<p>a. <i>Follow-up question: Have you implemented social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in other schools besides this one? If so, how many years of your teaching experience involved SEL programs?</i></p>	
<p>b. <i>Follow-up question: How do you think it benefits students? School staff? Schools</i></p>	
<p>4. Thinking about a typical school day, from arrival to dismissal, what do your academic lessons look like with SEL embedded?</p>	<p><i>Listen for social and emotional learning competencies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Self-awareness</i> • <i>Self-management</i> • <i>Social awareness</i> • <i>Relationship skills</i> • <i>Responsible-decision making</i>
<p>5. What social-emotional competencies or instructional practices are routinely used to promote students' development of social and emotional skills?</p>	<p><i>Listen for teaching practices:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cooperative learning</i> • <i>Student-centered discipline</i> • <i>Teacher language</i> • <i>Responsibility and choice</i> • <i>Classroom discussions</i> • <i>Balanced instruction</i> • <i>Academic press and expectations</i> • <i>Competence building—Modeling, Practicing, Feedback, and Coaching</i> • <i>Warmth and support</i>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Self-reflection and self-assessment</i> <p><i>Taken from Center on Great Teachers & Leaders, Teaching the Whole Child [Research-to-Practice Brief], 2014)</i></p>
a. <i>Follow-up question: What are the critical components or practices that all teachers in the school have to implement every day and why?</i>	
b. <i>Follow-up question: Did you have any input in selecting the critical components or practices? If no, why not?</i>	
c. <i>Follow-up question: What SEL practices, if any, would you adapt and why?</i>	
d. <i>Follow-up: What other school-wide practices would you like to adapt and why? (e.g. add to, combine with another program or strategies)</i>	
Integrated School-Wide SEL Programming and Other School-wide Practices	
6. What are some ways in which SEL is used to promote a positive classroom environment?	<i>Listen for routines, practices, and structures (e.g., teachers modeling SEL skills, classroom organization, classroom management, caring, respectful teacher support) that help to establish high-quality interactions between teachers and students and between students.</i>
a. <i>Follow-up question: How do you promote positive student-student interactions? Provide examples.</i>	<i>Listen for teacher consistently regulating their own emotions, managing stressful situations, modeling and teaching SEL skills, etc.</i>
7. How do you promote social and emotional learning through arrangement of the physical environment or space for students? Provide examples. How are students engaged?	<i>Listen for examples that include practices that promote creativity, responsibility, choice, independence and reflection.</i>
8. How does classroom management align with social and emotional learning? Provide examples. How are students involved?	<i>Listen for non-punitive practices that respect each students' development of SEL skills while providing opportunities for them to develop these skills withing a calm, organized, and safe environment</i>
Support	
9. How often do you receive professional development?	<p><i>Listen for, if not heard ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Probing question: What are some examples of the professional development that you have received to facilitate your knowledge</i>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
	<i>and skills in implementing social and emotional learning?</i>
a. <i>Follow-up question: When is it conducted? During the school day? Weekends? After school? How long?</i>	
b. <i>Follow-up question: Is it voluntary or mandatory?</i>	
c. <i>Follow-up question: Are incentives given for attendance?</i>	
d. <i>Follow-up question: How is it conducted? Is it grade specific?</i>	
e. <i>Follow-up question: Does it meet your needs? Why? Or Why not?</i>	
f. <i>Follow-up question: If not, what suggestions do you have to improve it?</i>	
10. Take me through a professional development session that met your needs. Describe what it looked like.	Listen for; if not heard ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Why was it effective in meeting your needs?</i>
a. <i>Follow-up question: Have you received other kinds of support that has effectively met your needs? Coaching? Consultation?</i>	
Lessons Learned and Final Thoughts	
16. What have you learned from implementing school-wide social and emotional learning?	
a. <i>Follow-up question: Describe one of your most successful experiences?</i>	Listen for; if not heard ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Why was it successful?</i>
b. <i>Follow-up question: What has been your biggest challenge with implementing social and emotional learning?</i>	Listen for; if not heard ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Is it resolved? If so, how? If not, how do you plan to resolve it?</i>
17. Finally, what advice can you share with an elementary school teacher who is implementing a school-wide social and emotional learning approach?	
<i>Thank interviewee for participation and time and discuss possible ways to follow-up.</i>	

Appendix G: School Leadership Team Member Interview Protocol

**Promoting Positive Student Development:
A qualitative case study of school-wide social and emotional learning in an elementary school**

School Leadership Team Member Interview Protocol

Introduction

Good morning (afternoon). Thank you for taking the time today to talk with me. As you know from our earlier meeting my name is Kathleen Theodore and I am a doctoral student at the University of New Orleans in Educational Leadership. As part of fulfilling the requirements for my doctorate in Educational Leadership, I am studying how social and emotional learning is integrated into an elementary school.

The purpose of this interview is to learn about your role in promoting social and emotional learning practices in this school. So, the questions will focus on describing structures, decision-making processes, and practices that support school-wide social and emotional practices. This interview will last no more than 60 minutes. There are no right, or wrong, or desirable, or undesirable answers. To facilitate my note-taking, I will be recording this interview. I am the sole researcher on this project who access to the recordings, which will be completely deleted after they are transcribed. Everything we discuss will be confidential. This is strictly voluntary; so please feel free to stop at any time. Before we begin, let’s take a brief moment to review and sign the consent form. Reread information on document and ensure participant consent.

Date:		Time:	
Interviewees		Role or Position	
Location:			

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
Background	
11. How many years have you been teaching?	
<i>c. Follow-up question: How long have you been at this school?</i>	
<i>d. Follow-up question: Have you taught at any other schools?</i>	
12. Have you implemented social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in	

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
<p>other schools besides this one? If so, how many years of your teaching experience involved SEL programs?</p>	
<p>13. What factors influenced your decision to teach at this school</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Rapport with staff at the school b. Geographic location of the school c. School climate and culture d. Social and Emotional Learning approach and/or practices e. Professional development resources at the school f. Opportunities to advance in my teaching profession at the school g. Opportunities to improve instructional practices at the school h. Opportunities to work with student population at the school i. Other [please specify] 	
Program Selection	
<p>14. Why did you select _____ (social and emotional learning program, approach, etc.)?</p>	
<p>c. Follow-up question: What were the main social and emotional learning skills that you were interested in addressing and why? Examples include, building positive relationships, responsible decision-making, solving problems, self-discipline, respecting others.</p>	<p>Listen for, if not heard ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why?
<p>15. Describe your role in selecting and implementing social and emotional learning program.</p>	<p>Listen, if not heard ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing question: What did the process look like? • Probing question: Who was involved in the process? • Probing question: What were some critical decisions? • Probing question: What was particularly difficult during the process?
<p>16. Describe your personal experiences with implementing school-wide social and emotional learning?</p>	
<p>a. Follow-up question: How does it fit the context of your school?</p>	<p>Listen for: Issues with a daptability and compatibility in meeting the needs of the school.</p>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
<i>b. Follow-up question: How is it compatible to your school's philosophy for teaching?</i>	
<i>c. Follow-up question: How is it compatible with your philosophy?</i>	
<i>d. Are there some practices that have been adapted?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Why or Why not?</i>
<i>e. Follow-up question: How do these factors influence the success of implementing social and emotional learning?</i>	
Integrated School-wide SEL Program Programming	
17. Describe how social and emotional learning is taught and reinforced beginning in the classrooms and then move into describing other areas of the school (e.g., playground, cafeteria, and hallway).	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: What are the components of _____ (SEL program or approach)?</i>
<i>e. Follow-up question: What do you think are the most critical aspects of the school-wide social and emotional approach? Why?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Are there any components that have been adapted?</i> • <i>Probing question: If so, why? How was the decision made to adapt a component?</i> • <i>Probing question: Was input received from teachers? Why? Or Why not?</i>
Integrated School-wide SEL Programming and Other School-wide Practices	
18. How has school-wide social and emotional learning influenced the development of school-wide practices?	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: What are some examples of activities that were created to build positive relationships in the school?</i>
<i>a. Follow-up question: How were these activities developed?</i>	<i>Listen for a process that included examining school needs and resources and considering what is needed at the student, classroom, and school levels.</i>
<i>b. Follow-up question: What was your role in supporting the development of school-wide practices?</i>	<i>Listening for serving as a member of team to plan or work on school-wide practices or a particular school wide-practice, such as school environment, curriculum, school improvement, etc.</i>
<i>c. Follow-up question: How do school-wide social and emotional learning activities build positive relationships in the school?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How were the activities developed and how do they promote social and emotional learning?</i> • <i>How is social and emotional learning aligned or integrated into students support services? For example, the work of the school counselor; school psychologist, social worker, etc.</i>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
19. What are some practices that have been developed to promote a positive school environment?	
a. <i>Follow-up question: How do discipline policies align with the social and emotional learning?</i>	<i>Listen for: Practices, policies, and structures associated with high-quality interactions, caring, and trusting relationships among staff, between staff and students, and between students.</i>
b. <i>Follow-up question: How do bullying prevention practices align with social and emotional learning?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What is your role in promoting a positive school environment?</i>
Lessons Learned and Final Thoughts	
18. What have you learned from implementing school-wide social and emotional learning?	
a. <i>Follow-up question: Describe one of your most successful experiences?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Why was it successful?</i>
b. <i>Follow-up question: What has been your biggest challenge with implementing social and emotional learning?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Is it resolved? If so, how? If not, how do you plan to resolve it?</i>
19. How is success measured?	<i>Listen for cycles of inquiry to facilitate continuous improvement (i.e., reflect on data used to monitor SEL implementation).</i>
13. What is the value of school-wide social and emotional learning?	
14. What are your next steps for SEL implementation?	<i>Listen for cycles of inquiry to facilitate continuous improvement.</i>
15. Where do you see SEL implementation in 5 years? Why?	<i>Listen for cycles of inquiry to facilitate continuous improvement.</i>
20. Finally, what advice can you share with a school leadership team member who has selected a new -wide social and emotional learning approach to implement?	
<i>Thank interviewee for participation and time and discuss possible ways to follow-up.</i>	

Appendix H: Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Promoting Positive Student Development: A qualitative case study of school-wide social and emotional learning in an elementary school

Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Introduction

Good morning (afternoon). Thank you for taking the time today to talk with me. As you know from our earlier meeting my name is Kathleen Theodore and I am a doctoral student at the University of New Orleans in Educational Leadership. As part of fulfilling the requirements for my doctorate in Educational Leadership, I am studying how social and emotional learning is integrated into an elementary school.

The purpose of this interview is to learn about social and emotional learning practices in your classroom. So, the questions will focus on describing classroom practices and strategies that support social and emotional learning. This interview will last no more than 60 minutes. There are no right, or wrong, or desirable, or undesirable answers. To facilitate my note-taking, I will be recording this interview. I am the sole researcher on this project who access to the recordings, which will be completely deleted after they are transcribed. Everything we discuss will be confidential. This is strictly voluntary; so please feel free to stop at any time. Before we begin, let's take a brief moment to review and sign the consent form. Reread information on document and ensure participant consent.

Warm-up

- Human subject requirements (audio-taping, note-taking, consent-form)
- Discussion of ground rules and topic and length of focus group session
- Introduction of facilitator and participants (Give name and educational experiences/roles)
- Provide background information on topic of interest.
- Discuss the purpose of the focus group.

Date:		Time:	
Interviewees	See sign-in sheet	Role or Position	
Location:		No. of participants	

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
Background	
20. How many years have you been teaching?	
<i>e. Follow-up question: How long have you been at this school?</i>	
Integrated School-wide SEL Programming	
21. Imagine that you had to describe school-wide social and emotional learning to someone that has never heard of it. From your perspective, how would you describe it?	
22. Let's think about school-wide social and emotional learning practices at _____ (name of school). Why did your school decide to implement social and emotional learning?	
<i>a. Follow-up question: What were the main social and emotional learning skills that you were interested in addressing? (For example, building positive relationships, responsible decision-making, solving problems, self-discipline, respecting others).</i>	<p><i>Listen for, if not heard ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Why?</i>
Program Selection	
23. Describe the process for when the decision was first made to implement school-wide social and emotional learning to selecting a program or an approach all the way to beginning implementation.	<p><i>Listen, if not heard ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: What did the process look like?</i> • <i>Probing question: Who was involved in the process?</i> • <i>Probing question: What were some critical decisions?</i> • <i>Probing question: What was particularly difficult during the process?</i>
24. Why was _____ (social and emotional learning program, approach, etc.) selected?	<p><i>Listen for role in selecting and implementing social and emotional learning program. If not shared, ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Who was involved in the process?</i>
<i>a. Follow-up question: How was consensus achieved on the SEL program and approach?</i>	<i>Listen for having a shared vision on what social and emotional competence means for students as well as what is necessary to meet students' SEL needs</i>
<i>b. Follow-up question: Why did the school decide to implement a school-wide social and emotional</i>	<i>Listen for evidence-based reasons, such as the likelihood of achieving the most successful outcomes, and having the ability to provide opportunities for</i>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
<i>learning approach instead of a classroom only approach?</i>	<i>students to have more practice with applying SEL skills.</i>
25. Describe how the social and emotional learning that takes place in the classroom is reinforced and applied in each area of the school (e.g., hallways, playground, cafeteria, etc.)	<i>Listen for: coordination of components for integrated school-wide SEL practices with opportunities for students to learn and apply SEL skills in every setting (classroom, cafeteria, playground, et.) of the school</i>
<i>f. Follow-up question: What social and emotional skills are addressed?</i>	<i>Listen for SEL core competencies.</i>
<i>g. Follow-up question: Are these skills addressed daily? Why? Or Why not?</i>	
<i>h. Follow-up question: What are some examples of adult behaviors?</i>	
<i>i. Follow-up: What are some examples of student behaviors?</i>	
Integrated School-wide SEL Programming	
26. How do you view your role in promoting a positive school environment in order to foster social and emotional learning and overall learning?	
<i>a. Follow-up question: How do you support positive student-student interactions?</i>	
<i>b. Follow-up question: How do you support positive adult-adult interactions?</i>	
<i>c. Follow-up question: How do you support positive adult-student interactions?</i>	
27. Thinking about your school's implementation of SEL, describe your experiences with the school-wide social and emotional learning approach?	
<i>a. Follow-up question: How does it fit the context of your school?</i>	<i>Listen for: Issues with a daptability and compatibility in meeting the needs of the school.</i>
<i>b. Follow-up question: How is it compatible to your school's philosophy for teaching?</i>	
<i>c. Follow-up question: How is it compatible with your philosophy?</i>	
<i>d. Follow-up: Are there some practices that have been adapted?</i>	<i>Listen for, if not heard ask:</i> • <i>Why or Why not?</i>
28. How do you think your school-wide SEL approach addresses the needs of all students?	
<i>a. Follow-up question: Are there any components or practices that you think</i>	<i>Listen for, if not heard ask:</i>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
<i>are more successful than others with students?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: If, so what are some examples? Why?</i>
b. <i>Follow-up question: How do you monitor the development of students' progress in social and emotional skills?</i>	
c. <i>Follow-up question: What additional services or structures exist to support students who are not making progress?</i>	<i>Listen for, if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: If so, how are these services aligned to social and emotional learning practices?</i>
Integrated School-wide SEL Programming and Other School-wide Practices	
29. What are some ways in which SEL is used to promote a positive classroom environment?	<i>Listen for routines, practices, and structures (e.g., teachers modeling SEL skills, classroom organization, classroom management, caring, respectful teacher support) that help to establish high-quality interactions between teachers and students and between students.</i>
a. <i>Follow-up question: How do discipline policies align with the social and emotional learning?</i>	<i>Listen for: positive discipline policies (e.g., restorative discipline).</i>
b. <i>Follow-up question: How do bullying prevention practices align with social and emotional learning</i>	<i>Listen for: anti-bullying prevention guidelines, school norms, values, policies, etc.</i>
c. <i>Follow-up question: How is social and emotional learning aligned or integrated into students support services? For example, the work of the school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, etc.</i>	<i>Listen for small group work, teaching classroom SEL lessons, and intervention services to reinforce and supplement classroom instruction.</i>
30. What have you learned from implementing school-wide social and emotional learning?	
a. <i>Follow-up question: Describe one of your most successful experiences?</i>	<i>Listen for, if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Why was it successful?</i>
b. <i>Follow-up question: What has been your biggest challenge with implementing social and emotional learning?</i>	<i>Listen for, if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Is it resolved? If so, how? If not, how do you plan to resolve it?</i>
Support	
31. How does school leadership support you in implementing social and emotional learning?	
a. <i>Follow-up question: In what ways, does leadership provide support to you?</i>	<i>Listen for, if not heard ask:</i>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: What are some examples?</i>
<p><i>b. Follow-up question: What are some other ways that you think leadership could support you?</i></p>	
<p><i>c. Follow-up: In what ways, is your social and emotional competence supported?</i></p>	
<p><i>d. Follow-up question: What do you think next steps for professional development should be at your school?</i></p>	
<p>32. How do school mental health professionals support you in implementing social and emotional learning?</p>	<p><i>Listen for small group work, and intervention services to reinforce and supplement classroom instruction.</i></p>
<p><i>a. Follow-up questions: What are some examples of activities, policies, and practices that were created to support school wide-social and emotional learning?</i></p>	
<p>33. How do structural issues (e.g., time, space, funding, resources, etc.) influence your implementation of school-wide social and emotional learning?</p>	
<p>Lessons Learned and Final Thoughts</p>	
<p>21. What have you learned from implementing school-wide social and emotional learning?</p>	
<p><i>a. Follow-up question: Describe one of your most successful experiences?</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Why was it successful?</i>
<p><i>b. Follow-up question: What has been your biggest challenge with implementing social and emotional learning?</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Is it resolved? If so, how? If not, how do you plan to resolve it?</i>
<p>22. Finally, what advice can you share with other elementary school teacher who are implementing a school-wide social and emotional learning approach?</p>	
<p><i>Thank interviewee for participation and time and discuss possible ways to follow-up.</i></p>	

Appendix I: School Leadership Team Focus Group Protocol

Promoting Positive Student Development: A qualitative case study of school-wide social and emotional learning in an elementary school

School Leadership Team Focus Group Protocol

Introduction

Good morning (afternoon). Thank you for taking the time today to talk with me. As you know from our earlier meeting my name is Kathleen Theodore and I am a doctoral student at the University of New Orleans in Educational Leadership. As part of fulfilling the requirements for my doctorate in Educational Leadership, I am studying how social and emotional learning is integrated into an elementary school.

The purpose of this focus group is to learn about the implementation of school-wide social and emotional learning practices at your school. This focus group will last no more than 60 minutes. There are no right, or wrong, or desirable, or undesirable answers. To facilitate my note-taking, I will be recording this interview. I am the sole researcher on this project who access to the recordings, which will be completely deleted after they are transcribed. Everything we discuss will be confidential. This is strictly voluntary; so please feel free to stop at any time. Before we begin, let's take a brief moment to review and sign the consent form. Reread information on document and ensure participant consent.

Warm-up

- Human subject requirements (audio-taping, note-taking, consent-form)
- Discussion of ground rules and topic and length of focus group session
- Introduction of facilitator and participants (Give name and educational experiences/roles)
- Provide background information on topic of interest
- Discuss the purpose of the focus group

Date:		Time:	
Interviewees	See sign-in sheet	Role or Position	
Location:		No. of participants	

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
Background	
34. How many years have has everyone been teaching at the district? Total years of teaching experience?	
Program Selection	
35. Describe school-wide social and emotional learning from the School Leadership Team's (SLT) perspective.	
36. Describe the process for selecting a school-wide social and emotional learning to selecting a program or an approach all the way to beginning implementation.	<p><i>Listen, if not heard ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: What did the process look like?</i> • <i>Probing question: Who was involved in the process?</i> • <i>Probing question: What were some critical decisions?</i> • <i>Probing question: What was particularly difficult during the process?</i>
37. How do structural issues (e.g., time, space, funding, resources, etc.) influence decision-making for implementing school-wide social and emotional learning?	
a. <i>Follow-up question: Describe ways in which the school leadership team has resolved any of these issues.</i>	
38. Describe the school leadership team's experiences with implementing school-wide social and emotional learning?	
a. <i>Follow-up question: How does it fit the school's context?</i>	<i>Listen for: Issues with a daptability and compatibility in meeting the needs of the school.</i>
b. <i>Follow-up question: How is it compatible to the school's philosophy for teaching?</i>	
c. <i>Follow-up question: How is it compatible with the school's philosophy?</i>	
d. <i>Are there some practices that have been adapted?</i>	<p><i>Listen for, if not heard ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Why or Why not?</i>
e. <i>Follow-up question: How do these factors influence SLT's the success of implementing social and emotional learning?</i>	
Integrated School-wide SEL Programming and Practices	
a. <i>Follow-up question: What social and emotional skills are addressed?</i>	<i>Ask these follow-up questions if not shared.</i>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
<i>b. Follow-up question: Are these skills addressed daily? Why? Or Why not?</i>	
<i>c. Follow-up question: What are some examples of adult behaviors?</i>	
<i>d. Follow-up question: What are some examples of student behaviors?</i>	
39. How is social and emotional learning embedded into the content areas?	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are some examples?</i>
40. How does SLT determine if the social and emotional learning needs of all students are addressed?	<i>Listen for cycles of inquiry to facilitate continuous improvement (i.e., reflect on data used to monitor SEL implementation).</i>
<i>a. Follow-up question: How do you monitor students' progress in the development of social and emotional skills?</i>	
<i>b. Follow-up question: What additional services or structures exist to support students who are not making progress?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If so, how are these services aligned to social and emotional learning practices?</i>
41. Describe and discuss SLT's experience with leading the implementation of school-wide SEL learning.	
<i>a. Follow-up question: What are some ways that you keep everyone (school staff) on the same page?</i>	
<i>b. Follow-up: How do you support positive student-student interactions?</i>	
<i>c. Follow-up: How do you support positive adult-adult interactions?</i>	
42. How do you determine if teachers need additional support?	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Follow-up: Describe examples of additional support provided to teachers.</i>
<i>a. Follow-up question: Are there any components or practices that you think are more successful than others with students?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: If, so what are some examples? Why?</i>
Lessons Learned and Final Thoughts	
23. What have you learned from implementing school-wide social and emotional learning?	
<i>a. Follow-up question: Describe one of SLT's most successful experiences?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Why was it successful?</i>
<i>b. Follow-up question: What has been SLT's biggest challenge with implementing social and emotional learning?</i>	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probing question: Is it resolved? If so, how? If not, how do you plan to resolve it?</i>

Question	Look-for (if applicable):
24. How do you evaluate the progress and impact of SEL implementation?	<i>Listen for cycles of inquiry to facilitate continuous improvement (i.e., reflect on data used to monitor SEL implementation).</i>
25. Thinking about implementation in stages (e.g., exploration, installation, initial and full implementation-NIRN), what stage do you think the school is at, and what are some steps that the school leadership team is planning to take on SEL in the near future?	<i>Listen for; if not heard ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing question: Why?
<i>Thank interviewee for participation and time and discuss possible ways to follow-up.</i>	

Appendix J: Teacher and School Leadership Focus Group Sign-in Sheets

Promoting Positive Student Development:

A qualitative case study of school-wide social and emotional learning in an elementary school

Teacher Focus Group Protocol

No.	Name	Role/Position	Content Area	Years of Experience
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
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Appendix J: Teacher and School Leadership Focus Group Sign-in Sheets

Promoting Positive Student Development:

A qualitative case study of school-wide social and emotional learning in an elementary school

School Leadership Team Focus Group Protocol

No.	Name	Role/Position	Content Area	Years of Experience
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
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Appendix K

Kathleen Theodore
4812 Mill Grove Lane
Marrero, LA 70072

Dear Dr. Meyers:

I am completing a doctoral dissertation at the University of New Orleans entitled "Promoting Positive Student Development: A Qualitative Case Study of School-Wide Social and Emotional Learning Practices." I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation excerpts from the following:


Devaney, E., O'Brien, M. U., Resnik, H., Keister, S., & Weissberg, R. P. (2006). *Sustainable schoolwide social and emotional learning (SEL): Implementation guide and toolkit*. Chicago: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

I have included a copy of the excerpts in the email. The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of my dissertation by UMI Company. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own [or your company owns] the copyright to the above-described material. If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me in the enclosed return envelope. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Theodore
University of New Orleans Doctoral Candidate

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:


Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
815 W. Van Buren St. Ste. 210
Chicago, IL 60607-3567
United States of America

Date: 10/16/18

Appendix L

UNO Letter of Consent for Adults

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Brian Beabout in the College of Education and Human Development, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations at the University of New Orleans.

I am conducting a research study to examine how an elementary school integrates school-wide social and emotional learning into its daily practices. I am requesting your participation, which will involve your participation in a face-to-face interview.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation includes contributing to advancing social and emotional learning and an understanding of how schools can best support and integrate school-wide social and emotional practices to promote positive student development.

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call Kathleen Theodore at 504-228-8695 or Dr. Brian Beabout at 504-283-7388.

Sincerely,
Brian Beabout, Ph.D.
Kathleen Theodore, Ph.D. Candidate

By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the above study.

Consent to Audiotape • • • Yes • No

This study involves audio recording of your interview. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio recordings or any transcripts created from them. The audio-recording will be kept secure and only the researcher(s) will be permitted to listen to the recordings.

Participant (print name)

Researcher (print name)

Participant (sign) date

Researcher (sign) date

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, please contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon at the University of New Orleans (504) 280-3990.

Appendix M

University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research University of New Orleans

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Brian Beabout

Co-Investigator: Kathleen Theodore

Date: April 3, 2017

Protocol Title: Promoting Positive Student Development: A Qualitative Case Study of School-wide Social and Emotional Learning in an Elementary School

IRB#: 01Apr17

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures described in this protocol application are exempt from federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.101 category 2, due to the fact that any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Exempt protocols do not have an expiration date; however, if there are any changes made to this protocol that may cause it to be no longer exempt from CFR 46, the IRB requires another standard application from the investigator(s) which should provide the same information that is in this application with changes that may have changed the exempt status.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project.
Sincerely,



Robert D. Laird, Ph.D., Chair
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Vita

Kathleen Theodore was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. Theodore is currently a Senior Technical Assistance Consultant at the American Institutes for Research where she is the early childhood project lead for the Southeast Comprehensive Center, providing technical assistance and support to state education agencies in the SECC region. Theodore's past career experiences were in the Louisiana Department of Education where she served as a Regional Reading First Coordinator for Region 1. Prior to working for the Louisiana Department of Education, she worked in the New Orleans Public Schools in various roles, such as an elementary teacher, a district reading facilitator, a staff developer, and a reading coach. Theodore earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Learning Disabilities with a minor in Elementary Education, a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Xavier University, and a PhD in Educational Administration K-12 Concentration from the University of New Orleans.