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# Examining Social Emotional Learning for Gifted Students

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Examining Social Emotional Learning for Gifted Students

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## Abstract

The purpose of this intrinsic qualitative study was to investigate the use of universal social emotional learning (SEL) curricula as a primary means for supporting the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted students in a large school district in the western U.S. The District, or case for this study, was not using any specific systemic social and emotional programming for their identified gifted learners. Through a constructivist social cognitive theoretical lens, the efficacy of universal curricula for gifted learners was explored. The increasing use of SEL in school reform efforts to improve academic success has provided much research on SEL curricula (Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Zins et al., 2007). The goal of this study was to provide educational leaders a way to examine universal SEL programs' efficacy for the affective programming needs of gifted learners.

The large school district setting yielded participants purposively chosen to include one class in each of three elementary schools (*n* = 3) where gifted learners were included in regular education classrooms using three different universal SEL curricula – Well-Managed Schools, Second Step, and Conscious Discipline. A multi-step process was used to create an evaluation tool, the Social Emotional Learning for Exceptional Children's Thinking and Emotional Development (SELECTED) Rubric™ (2017) with categories and sub-categories based on analysis of research-based best practices for supporting the

social and emotional needs of gifted learners. Resources and references came from the National Association for Gifted Children's (NAGC) standards, the state's Department of Education, and others (e.g., Eckert & Robins, 2017; Neihart et al., 2016a; Robinson et al., 2007; Rogers, 2002; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009). Data were collected via document analysis, 30-minute semi-structured interviews of the teachers and two district administrators, and the evaluation of the three universal curricula via the Rubric.

The results of this study indicate that although teachers had various levels of knowledge about the affective needs of gifted students, they all saw weaknesses in their SEL interventions for meeting their gifted students' needs. The findings of the study are based on a small sample size, yet the use of universal SEL curricula was not substantiated by these findings as an effective way to meet the unique affective needs of gifted students.

*Keywords:* gifted students, gifted and talented, social emotional learning (SEL), universal SEL, affective education, gifted social emotional development

encouraging though, than my amazing husband, Dave Turner. Without him, Orbit

Bubblemint Gum, and my trusty companions, Jasmine and Jack, I am not sure I would

have been able to complete this work.

I dedicate this project to all of the gifted students who didn't have the opportunity

to understand or embrace their differentness, sometimes to their detriment, but often

yielding to perseverance in going forward, and to those who will hopefully receive more

support for their social and emotional developmental needs because of this research.

> Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.
> From Apple's ad campaign, written by Rob Siltanen (Greenfield, 2011)

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## Chapter One: Introduction

*Humanity has made two promises to its children. The first is to prepare a world which accepts them and provides them with opportunities to live, grow and create in safety. The other is to help them develop their whole beings to the fullest in every respect. Education is the vehicle through which we try to keep these promises.*
*Annemarie Roeper, (Roeper, 1990, p. 23)*

**Background**

Educating the whole child has been a focus for American public schools since Thomas Jefferson presented his *Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia* in 1818, and the publication of the 1918 report, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (Wraga, 1999). In the 1930s, John Dewey proposed educational reforms which included opportunities for social interactions that encouraged students to interact in real life social situations (Williams, 2017). More recently, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), a nonpartisan and nonprofit leader for educational leadership, has begun an initiative based on their 2007 report, in which they advocate for education to take a whole child approach (The Commission on the Whole Child, 2007; García & Weiss, 2016; Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza, & Giles, 2015). Focusing on the needs of the 21st century, the whole child approach is "an effort to transition from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of all children" (Scott, 2017, 32). It is important for educators to remember that children have an inherent desire to grow physically, intellectually, and spiritually (Cross, 2005; Gatto-Walden, 2016; Roeper, 1995). Affective support focusing on the whole child. This perspective helps to "remind

us of the importance of the human spirit and the need to value and nurture each child's distinctive qualities" (Betts & Housand, 2016, para. 3).

Stuckart and Glanz (2010) in their book, *Revisiting Dewey: Best Practices for Educating the Whole Child Today,* stated that, "Ignoring a student's emotional well-being by focusing exclusively on building content knowledge can lead to disastrous consequences" (p. 265). Gabrieli, Ansel, and Krachman's (2015) report for the Consortium for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) reported that a lack of life skills, those that are taught using social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, have caused students to drop-out, delay high school graduation, not enter college, or fail to complete degrees. For gifted students to reach their maximum potential, they also must have their social and emotional needs met (Neihart, 2006). There are major concerns with meeting the needs of the whole child, and some researchers have estimated that up to 50% of gifted students may be underachieving (Siegle, 2013). Unfilled positions in highly skilled areas lend evidence to the existence of a large skill gap which may indicate that students are not able to reach their full capabilities (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). Estimates of this skill gap purport that almost 7 million youth (16-24) are considered "opportunity youth," meaning they are neither in school nor working (Belfield, Levin, & Rosen, 2012). National and international studies point out that social emotional skills could be honed with the implementation and use of SEL curricula (Bridgeland et al., 2013). Gifted students are part of these statistics as well. They also need their specific social and emotional needs met along with their needs for academic growth (Reis & Renzulli, 2004). Gifted young people who have both high cognitive and

social emotional skills could fill many of the unfilled highly skilled positions open due to this skill gap.

Research on the social and emotional development and needs of gifted and talented learners has a long history (Betts & Neihart, 1985; Borland, 1989; Delisle, 1991; Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002). In 1982, Annemarie Roeper, a pioneer in gifted education, wrote in one of her seminal pieces that gifted children understand the world around them differently than their age peers or even non-gifted precocious youngsters (Prufrock Press, 2012). According to Gallagher (2003), by virtue of their giftedness, gifted students bring with them specialized needs for social and emotional support. Due to advanced cognitive abilities and intensity of feelings, gifted learners have different social and emotional needs than typical learners (Gallagher, 2003). The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2009) noted that gifted students have social development issues like their age peers, with overlays of additional needs from their typical age peers, as will be explored throughout this study (e.g., Betts & Neihart, 1985; Cross, 2011; Delisle, Galbraith, & Espeland, 2002; Neihart, Pfeiffer, & Cross, 2016b; Reis & McCoach, 2016; Reis & Renzulli, 2004; Roeper, 1982).

NAGC's position statement, "Nurturing Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children," reports that gifted students should have both their universal and unique social and emotional needs recognized and developed by "teachers, administrators, and school counselors [who] can and should intentionally, purposefully, and proactively nurture socio-emotional development in these students" (NAGC, 2009b, para. 2). Empirical research studies have shown that gifted and talented learners have specific and

different social emotional needs in addition to those of their typical peers (Silverman, 2005). According to Coleman and Cross (2000), theorists have advanced ideas related to the social and emotional development of gifted learners from three different views — universal, universal with special characteristics, and non-universal. In their postmodern view, Coleman and Cross (2000) propose that the specific social and emotional developmental patterns of gifted children follow a combination of each of these theories. More importantly, Cross (2011) suggests that the environment dictates what types of "issues" gifted learners may have, rather than creating an "always wide-ranging and often inconsistent" (p.11) list of needs. He maintains that "the culture in which a child is immersed has an important influence on the experience of being gifted" (p. 11). This research study examines the interplay between the research based on SEL curricula and the social emotional development of identified gifted students in heterogeneously grouped classrooms, with little to no specific intervention for their giftedness.

**Persistent Problem of Practice**

According to the NAGC, gifted children and young adults "may be at greater risk for specific kinds of social-emotional difficulties if their needs are not met" ("Social & Emotional Issues," n.d., para. 1). This information continues to assert that it is important for "parents, adults, and caregivers" to provide a "strong framework for social-emotional health" (para. 2.). According to Neihart (2017), providing the needed psychosocial conditions for allowing gifted learners to "experience well-being and develop their talents to the highest possible levels" (p. 122) requires comprehensive programming consisting of more than specific counseling services or general classroom affective activities.

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In a large metropolitan school district in a western state, the community partner for this research study (hereafter named "The District") had no specific funds or programming allocated for the development of the social and emotional needs of The District's gifted student population. Shortly before the beginning of this research, The District had undertaken a learning readiness and engagement analysis done by CASEL to provide recommendations for possible implementation of systemic universal SEL at all grade levels. The results of this analysis are found in Appendix O. The published body of research by CASEL points to the importance of non-cognitive learning for all children. A study outlined in a working paper by Gabrieli et al. (2015) is the most recent basis for CASEL's work. In this document, the authors state that competency in the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills of students need "to be incorporated effectively into educational policy and practice as complements to existing academic and cognitive goals to ensure schooling works to help all students flourish" (p. v).

The funding and programming for The District's 15% talented and gifted (TAG) students, identified using published data from The District, focused primarily on the development of state mandated Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs), particularly at the K-8 level. These students spent most of their school days included in regular education classrooms with pull-out programming available in a few schools, mostly for above grade-level academic instruction. Advanced level academic programming for cognitive growth was the major focus for TAG high school students. There was little to no focus on the TAG students' social emotional well-being, as recommended by NAGC, based on the lack of mention in The District's online annual budget.

**Contributing factors to the problem of practice.** The Carnegie Project on the

Education Doctorate (CPED) defines a problem of practice as "a persistent,

contextualized, and specific issue embedded in the work of a professional practitioner"

(Buss & Zambo, 2014, p. 5). When delving into real world problems, it quickly becomes

clear that they are complicated with interlaced causes, not easily discerned from each

other. In the case of supporting the social and emotional needs of gifted learners, there

are many and varied roadblocks. These problems "are multi-faceted, complex, and often

ill structured…they have no certain causes or solutions" (Buss & Zambo, 2014, p. 10).

Important to the research topic choice is to choose a project that touches the heart of the

researcher. In this case, the researcher's experiences have included some work with gifted

learners and their social emotional needs, both in helping to meet those needs and in

witnessing what can occur when those needs are not met.

> *Unmet social emotional needs.* The 2010 *Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted*
>
> *ProgrammingStandards* by NAGC call for educators to develop both cognitive
>
> and affective growth in gifted and talented students (Johnsen, 2012). Pfeiffer and
>
> Burko (2016) contend that although "Gifted students can and do encounter the full
>
> range of psychological problems that any child or adolescent struggles with in
>
> today's fast-paced society" (p. 244), there are other developmental challenges
>
> with which gifted students may also struggle. Even though research designates
>
> many different designs for gifted services, when there are limited allocations of
>
> resources and leadership in program development, the focus is often solely on

differentiation within heterogeneously grouped classrooms versus other, perhaps

more effective, programming (Rogers, 2007).

Although many studies have been done over the years to create models depicting

the specific social and emotional development of gifted children, Thomas Buescher

(1985) created a framework including six dynamic issues of giftedness during

adolescence. The purpose of his framework was to identify concerns related to the social

and emotional needs of gifted students (Cross, 2011). These issues are: (1) ownership –

Am I gifted? (2) dissonance – tension between performance and expectations, (3) risk-

taking, (4) others' expectations, (5) impatience, and (6) identity (Buescher, 1985; Cross,

2011). Cross (2011) continues to discuss the different approaches researchers have taken

in terms of whether social emotional differences between gifted students and their non-

gifted peers should be singled out, or if just knowing what gifted students need without

that distinction is more effective.

Coleman and Cross (2000) and other researchers (Coleman, Micko, & Cross,

2015; Friedman-Nimz, 2009; Neihart, 2017) have explained that often the most impactful

aspect of a student's social and emotional development may be caused by a misalliance

between the school environment and the gifted learner's needs. According to Cross

(2014), support for students with high potential "requires constant challenge,

opportunities to fail, and practice – lots and lots of practice" (p. 265). Kanvesky and

Keighley (2003) assert that there are five specific characteristics of a positive

environment for effectively engaging gifted students: a caring teacher, complexity,

challenge, control, and choice. Other important aspects of a constructive educational

environment for gifted learners include acceleration opportunities, use of appropriate grouping strategies, and off-level assessments (Cross, 2014). According to the NAGC's (2009b) "Position Statement: Nurturing Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children," research samples are not giving enough attention to non-asset aspects of giftedness, including that there have been "relatively few qualitative studies of gifted populations [which] has also contributed to a limited understanding of unexpressed thoughts and emotions of gifted youth" (para. 6). In recent years, shifting educational priorities towards the needs of struggling students, serving gifted students in regular education classrooms, and a decreased focus on teacher professional development (PD), have all contributed to less supportive school environments for gifted learners (Robinson & Reis, 2016). Researchers have surmised that each of these has been seen to contribute to problems for gifted learners' social and emotional development (Coleman & Cross, 2000; Coleman et al., 2015; Cross, 2011, 2014; Neihart et al., 2016a; Plucker & Dilley, 2016).

Borland (1989) pointed out that even the most conscientious teachers will find it difficult to meet the wide variety of student needs relying solely on differentiation as their only tool. Unfortunately, inclusion in regular education classrooms has been shown to be a weak and ineffective programming model for elementary and middle level gifted students (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2013). One main reason for this weakness, as shown in many studies, is the fact that most teachers have had little or no specialized training in gifted education in their teacher education programs (e.g. Loveless, Farkas & Duffett, 2008; NAGC, 2009a; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2005). Research on the

use of universal SEL curricula for meeting the diverse social emotional needs of gifted

and talented students in regular education classrooms was elusive during the researcher's

extensive literature search. SEL intervention studies showed positive effects based on

both academic progress and other lifelong benefits for diverse groups of students when

systemic social emotional programming was employed (Bierman et al., 2010; Maras,

Thompson, Lewis, Thornburg, & Hawks, 2014; Schonfeld et al., 2015; Zins, Bloodworth,

Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007). In searching the literature, however, no studies were

found that disaggregated data, showed methodology, or results specific to universal SEL

curricula and gifted learners.

   *Changes in federal laws.* In 2001, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act

(NCLB) as a new versionof the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), with

test scores as the focal point for its accountability system (Loveless, Parkas, & Duffet,

2008). Critics of this federal policy argued that the structure of the law caused the focus

for public education to be on raising the success of low-achieving students, while high

achievers received little attention or funding for improving their learning (Beisser, 2008;

Loveless et al., 2008). Math and language arts skills were tested, and the focus was on

bringing low scoring students up to minimum competency levels (Loveless et al., 2008).

Research and analysis were done using National Assessment of Educational

Progress (NAEP) annual scores in which samplings of students in Grades 4, 8, and 12

from all 50 states were tested (Plucker, Burrough, & Song, 2010). Plucker et al. (2010)

showed that the results of this required testing indicated that there was an "excellence

gap." Low achievers gained more, but the loss of funding for TAG budgets may have

caused high achievers to lose ground, leaving them behind (Beisser, 2008; Loveless et al., 2008; Plucker et al., 2010).

Political trends brought a change to federal laws for a new version of the ESEA; in December of 2016, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed ("Funding for Social-Emotional Learning in ESSA," 2016). One major difference in this newest iteration of the Act is that success is measured with traditional cognitive test scores, and a measure of some type of nonacademic score (Blad, 2016). This noncognitive requirement in ESSA may provide the opportunity for districts to fund implementation of SEL curricula as part of their school improvement goals. Because of this, district and local leaderships' use of noncognitive measures, included in their overall accountability reporting, may support affective programming (Blad, 2016; Klein, 2016). Weissberg and Cascarino (2013) state that the momentum for creating a balance between SEL skills and academics will become an important foundation for educational reform, now that it has been made important at all levels of education, from classrooms to districts to the state and federal levels. A dearth of evidence was found in current literature showing the use of universal SEL curricula for meeting the social emotional needs or issues of gifted and talented students. As districts, such as the one in this study, seek to set noncognitive social emotional goals and embed SEL into academic endeavors (CASEL, 2016), it is important to determine what aspects of universal SEL curricula, if any, will address the diverse needs of gifted students.

Another provision in the ESSA may also be supportive of gifted learners' needs. According to NAGC (Welch, n.d.), monies coming from the federal government may

now be used to support gifted and talented students. Included in these changes was the enactment of the To Aid Gifted and High Ability Learners by Empowering the Nation's Teachers (TALENT) Act, which passed with bipartisan support and was the last bill that President Obama signed into law. It is now Public Law 115-1 ("TALENT Act," n.d.). According to Welch (n.d.):

> The ESSA has restored accountability for student achievement to the states, but:
> - Requires reporting on which students are achieving at the advanced level
> - Requires that Title II funds be used to help teachers support gifted and talented students
> - Clarifies that Title I funds may be used to support low-income gifted students. (para. 6)

Between the ESSA and the TALENT Act, states are encouraged to use funds for supporting PD of teachers in strategies for advancing gifted and talented students' achievement and knowledge levels (Blad, 2016; "Funding for Social-Emotional Learning in ESSA," 2016; Welch, n.d.).

   ***Site-based management.*** Another contributor to this problem of practice comes from the enactment of site-based management (SBM) as a process for decision-making related to curriculum choice and implementation (Gauch, 2011). According to the community partner for this study, decision-makers at schools in The District employ SBM for many administrative decisions, including those related to choosing and implementing SEL curriculum. Many districts across this western state moved towards an SBM system along with almost a third of the country's school districts during the 1990s (David, 1995-1996). Districts' decentralizing decisions aimed at school improvement initiatives moved decisions from the district level to the building level (Holloway, 2000;

Ogawa & White, 1994). The move to SBM was supported by school-improvement

research that showed that including more stakeholders in the decision-making process

would ameliorate the process; accordingly, experts touted this trend as a means to

improve student achievement (Mallory, et al., 2011). The strengths and challenges of

SBM have remained in many districts well into the 21$^{st}$ century (Mallory et al., 2011).

Curriculum choices, which frequently include choosing a universal SEL curriculum, are

often decided via SBM procedures (David, 1995-1996).  The district in this study

currently employs SBM for a large portion of their programming and curriculum

decisions.

As with many educational initiatives, SBM continues to currently have positive

and negative effects. Wiggins (1998) asserts that to achieve authentic school reform

directed at improving student success, the accountability aspect of SBM may be the only

effective way to assure that entire communities will be engaged in increasing student

success. Encouraging partnerships with teachers, building leadership, parents, and other

members of the community offers a grassroots platform to enable true change (David,

1995-1996). Risks involved with SBM include the expectation that laypeople involved

will expect short-term results for long-term goals. Goals can often be lost in the lengthy

time and energy it takes for the SBM process (David, 1995-1996). Additionally, as Fullan

(2007) states, SBM may be a simplistic solution for changing the amazingly complex

systems that exist within the educational world and specifically about the introduction

and maintenance of a big change such as implementation of SEL programming. Simply

moving decisions to school sites may not be enough to build the capacity and

commitment within and among schools that is required for implementing something as comprehensive as a universal SEL framework (Fullan, 2007).

In the purposive sample schools chosen within the district explored in this case study, decision-makers at each school used SBM in different ways to determine whether they would adopt a universal SEL curriculum or not, and if so, which one. According to their websites, each school referred to research on SEL curricula and some type of needs-based assessment in their determination of which programs would be the most successful for their individual school. As states, districts, and schools are becoming more interested in seeking noncognitive measures to illustrate a school's effectiveness in complying with new ESSA standards, they are choosing commercially created universal SEL curricula (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). Research supporting this belief has been conducted showing that mastery of SEL skills may predict student academic and life-long success (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Zins et al., 2007).

**Problem summary.**  With a lack of resources for specific affective support for gifted students, schools may attempt to meet the social emotional needs of all students, including those identified as gifted, via universal SEL curricula (Borland, 1989; Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2013; Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007; Rogers, 2002). A one-size-fits-all curriculum may not support the specific and unique social and emotional needs of gifted students. Further complicating the introduction of universal SEL curricula, Coleman and Cross (2000) explain that even in the theoretical expertise of social emotional development in both gifted and non-gifted children, "there are three co-

existing viewpoints" (p. 3). According to Coleman and Cross (2000), gifted learners'

social and emotional needs may be "Universal, universal with special characteristics, and

non-universal. These views translate into these statements: the gifted are like all children

(universal); the gifted are like all children and yet (some) have some special quality, too

(universal with special characteristics (p. 3) or that gifted students have completely

different social emotional characteristics from typical children. They ask, "Are gifted

individuals qualitatively or quantitatively different from non-gifted?" (p. 4). Whatever

the answer to that question is, Coleman et al. (2015) assert that it is of the utmost

importance for school staff to understand "the phenomenon of giftedness" (p. 373) in

order to be equipped for addressing the needs of gifted students.

**Research Design**

Qualitative research simplistically is research in which words rather than numbers

(most often used in quantitative studies) are collected and analyzed (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). In working to understand "how people interpret their experiences, how they

construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016, p. 6), qualitative methods are the most appropriate. When multiple realities

are constructed through "lived experiences and interactions with others," Creswell (2013,

p. 31) explains that social constructivism is in play. Other philosophical beliefs related to

a constructivist framework occur when both the researcher and the researched co-

construct reality. Creswell (2013) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest qualitative

case study for researching a complex phenomenon within its context for studies such as

this. Baxter and Jack (2008) postulate that "rigorous qualitative case studies afford

researchers opportunities to explore or describe a phenomenon in context using a variety of data sources" (p. 544). Best and Kahn (2006) identify case study as "a way of organizing social data for viewing social reality" (p. 259). Intrinsic case study is a research approach in which the case itself "is of primary interest in the exploration. The exploration is driven by a desire to know more about the uniqueness of the case rather than to build theory or how the case represents other cases" (Grandy, 2010). Finding a dearth of studies in the literature that addressed the utilization of commercially created universal SEL curricula as the sole means for meeting gifted students' needs, the research questions addressed in this study represent an emerging topic within the realm of educational research.

According to Timmons and Cairns (2012), case study methodology offers an advantage when contributing to the broader field of education. A case study's focus is an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37). Yin (2013) denotes that researchers can use case study in many different types of study situations and in support of a wide variety of types of data gathering. The case for this study was one school district in a western state. This holistic study gathered information from three embedded units as its samples (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A purposeful criterion-based sampling process gave rise to three samples, or embedded units, within which to explore this case. This study examined the way a commercially created universal SEL curriculum was used by each school sampled as its sole means of meeting the social and emotional developmental needs of its gifted learners. One class from each school drove this intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995). "The structure of the case report is likely to be

emergent in nature, largely determined by the stories and experiences that surface from the data collected" (Grandy, 2010, p. 2). The stories told through these samples allowed the researcher to create a thick description of the samples and the case, thus allowing readers to draw their own interpretations of the case (Grandy, 2010).

**Purpose of the study.** The purpose of this intrinsic qualitative case study is to explore the efficacy of universal SEL curricula for serving gifted students' social and emotional developmental needs in a large school district in a western state.

**Research questions.**

1. What are the characteristics of gifted learners addressed by universal social and emotional learning curricula?

2. What are teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the universal social emotional learning curricula employed in their classrooms for their gifted and talented students?

3. How does utilization of universal social emotional learning curricula address the social and emotional needs of gifted students?

**Community partner.** The case for this research was bounded, consisting of one large, metropolitan school district in a western state. This is an intrinsic case study, as "the researcher is guided by…her own interest in the case itself rather than in extending a theory or generalizing across cases" (Grandy & Grandy, 2009, para. 2). In setting the bounds of the case for this study, the researcher contacted The District to be the case for this research. The District (a pseudonym) agreed to be the community partner for this research (Appendix H).

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Initially, the researcher met with District leadership, including the superintendent and the head of the Talented and Gifted Office. During this meeting, the community partner shared that there was an upcoming initiative for possible systemic adoption of SEL curricula. Next, the researcher made connections with the administrator charged with overseeing student support initiatives. He agreed to be The District's liaison for this research project (Appendix G). This leader gave both verbal and written consent for this partnership (found in IRB information). Several meetings with the community partner took place during this study. The results of the meetings included providing access to documentation related to the possible future adoption and implementation of SEL curricula. The District gave the researcher permission to conduct the research. With this permission, the administrator gave the researcher access to data showing which universal curricula were currently being systemically used and in which schools.

During the face-to-face meetings and email communication, the community partner identified several different strategies being employed by schools in The District to include SEL in the curriculum. Only a few schools were using commercially created universal SEL curricula school-wide, and each of those was an elementary school. The researcher utilized this information for the purposeful sampling that took place later in the research process. Interviews also took place between both the community partner liaison and an administrator from the Gifted Education Office (Appendix F). These interview transcripts yielded another data source with which to "elicit in-depth, context-rich personal accounts, perceptions, and perspectives from the district perspective" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 112).

**Methodological overview.** Many of the steps in this research process were interwoven and often occurred concurrently. The case for this study, The District, was the location of initiation for the procedures. This study began with a meeting of District leadership. This meeting gave the researcher insights into the direction The District was moving towards for addressing the SEL needs for all of its students. This gave the researcher ideas for designing her study related specifically to the gifted students. This meeting took place in the winter of 2016. Leadership suggested that this step would present a valuable opportunity for research on The District's gifted population. After meeting with the researcher's advisors several times, the IRB process approved the research. The community partnership was formalized with a signed agreement (Appendix G). The next phase included getting the approval of The District's Research Committee.

The literature review included seeking studies and articles related both to general SEL and the social emotional developmental needs of gifted students. It provided the researcher with the information needed to begin the identification of the best practices related to supporting the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted students. This step provided a strong foundation for the creation of a rubric which became the analysis tool from which the commercially prepared universal curricula were analyzed. The Rubric was refined using document analysis later in the study.

Determining which schools were systemically employing SEL curricula led to a search for teachers in those schools willing to participate in this study. A recruitment letter was emailed to all $2^{nd} - 5^{th}$ grade teachers in those schools (Appendix A). One teacher from each school responded and agreed to participate. Once these teachers had

been determined, they agreed to the interviews and signed the teacher informed consent

forms (Appendix A). The interviews were then scheduled and carried out using a research

protocol (Appendix C) designed with sources cited in the Interview Question Rationale

document (Appendix D). Following professional transcription, the researcher analyzed

the responses, looking for common themes and ideas on the efficacy of the SEL curricula

for use with gifted learners. In case studies, each interviewee can be considered an

informant on the topic at hand (Best & Kahn, 2006). The researcher conducted 30-minute

semi-structured interviews with each teacher, and questions included demographic

information about each teacher and their perceptions of the curriculum used. The

professionally transcribed interview data were then member checked to ensure that the

transcriptions were accurate from the participants' points of view (Creswell & Miller,

2000).

In the meantime, the researcher emailed several experts in the field of gifted

education and psychology to act as reviewers of the Rubric draft (Appendix J).

Adjustments and changes were made based on these reviews, and alterations were made

to the Rubric's content and formatting, enabling the researcher to solidify it (Appendix

K). It was then used to analyze each of the three curricula being used in the sample

schools. The analysis was based on the categories and sub-categories in the Rubric. An

interview protocol (Appendix F) was created for enabling the use of District viewpoints

to add insight for a richer case description. Data from these professionally prepared

transcriptions were also analyzed to look for themes. Other documents were gathered and

analyzed related to the case as a whole and the individual schools acting as samples for

the study. Much of this additional data was gathered via the internet on the state's

Department of Education website, as well as the District and schools' sites. This data

included demographic information and mission and vision statements.

This study utilized a three-part data collection process that included systematic

procedures and analytic generalizations of documents and interview transcripts. The first

phase of this study was the creation of a rubric with which the curricula in question were

later analyzed. Critical design features for each of the curricula or programs were

gathered and analyzed. The text related to each of the curricula and programs, including

the content, objectives, organizing principles, methodology used, and the mechanical

aspects of the curricula, was scrutinized and assessed using the Rubric. Additional

curricula documentation was found on their respective websites. Results are reported

based on the themes and categories from the Rubric (Appendix K) and also those found

in the lessons (Appendices Q, R, & S).

Documents which were analyzed included the three commercially produced SEL

curricula, their scope and sequences, objectives, learning activities, and assessment and

outcome goals. Curricula, according to Bowen (2009), fall into the category of

documents, which "have been a staple in qualitative research for many years" (p. 26).

The analysis of documents was a systematic procedure in which printed text, images,

videos, blogs, and even songs (Appendix U) were reviewed and evaluated (Creswell,

2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The analysis of these documents generated data which

were sorted into themes and categories "through content analysis" (Bowen, 2009). As the

qualitative research iterative process took place, additional documents related to the

schools, or embedded units, became apparent during the study and are included in Chapter 4 (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe a "case" as one specific unit to be studied. This unit or bounded system can be a group, community, school, classroom, or as in this study, a school district. Embedded units of this case included an analysis of each of the curriculum used in the sample schools; using the qualitative rubric created for this study allowed comparisons to surface (Creswell, 2014). The Rubric was utilized to assess each of the curriculum. The goal for the Rubric was for use in evaluating any type of universal SEL curriculum. The contents of the Rubric are rooted in the best practices of gifted and talented affective programming (e.g. Eckert & Robins, 2017; Robinson et al., 2007; Rogers, 2007; VanTassel-Baska, Cross, & Olenchak, 2009). Each of these forms of data led the researcher to findings, assertions, and conclusions related to the efficacy of universal SEL curricula for use with gifted students.

**Assumptions.** When using case study methodology, assumptions are made that the case being analyzed can be expected to be either more similar or more different from others (Flick, 2007). In analyzing three different curricula with similar goals, it was assumed that the contrast between the curricula was most likely minimal. However, the researcher was also focused on identifying examples of the effectiveness for meeting categories and sub-categories determined to support gifted students' social and emotional development, using analysis strategies that "develop a more systematic understanding of the material being analyzed and the structures in it" (Flick, 2007, p. 41). Several assumptions were also made regarding the interview portion of data gathering. The

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assumption that the teachers were knowledgeable about the relevance of SEL in their curriculum was the first assumption (Flick, 2007). Another assumption was whether each of the teachers in the study was using the SEL curriculum with fidelity. Flick (2007) also mentions that assumptions are made regarding what happens when people, in this case the teachers interviewed, talk about any type of experience related to their life. Thus, the assumption was made that during interviews the teachers answered questions with candor. It is also assumed that the teachers involved knew who their identified talented and gifted students were, had some knowledge of the unique social and emotional developmental needs of gifted learners, and were aware of those students' state required affective ALP goals.

   **Limitations.** Creswell (2013) recommends the use of case study when the unit of analysis is based on a program of instruction. The focus of this study directly related to the research problem, universal SEL curricula being used for development of the social emotional needs of gifted students. Although context-dependent knowledge may be the basis of what social science has to offer the research world, case studies give social scientists concrete practical knowledge of human behavior (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Limitations inherent in case study include issues with the generalizability of results, researcher influence or bias, difficulty with replication, and the time-consuming nature of gathering and analyzing large amounts of data (McLeod, 2008).

   Although there were other limitations uncovered as the research progressed, there were several inherent with both the samples (schools) chosen and with the researcher as the instrument for collecting data. Limitations of case study research design began with

the researcher's role in selecting the case or cases (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) also explains that in determining the boundaries for case studies, the researcher determines how much information will be gathered for comparison and analysis. In choosing to conduct this research in just one school district, with a sampling of only three schools, one teacher from each, and three different curricula, the boundaries of this case were a limiting factor. Only elementary level schools were using an SEL curriculum school-wide, limiting the study to that level of education. Once the schools were identified, a limited number of potential interviewees emerged. Then, the purposeful sampling for this study was based on the interest and availability of individuals in the pool of participants. Time became a limit as well, with a long lag time between receiving university IRB permission and the receipt of District approval for permission to interview teachers. This led to a short window of time, just the spring semester of the school year, in which to recruit teachers in the few schools using systemic SEL curricula. With three different teachers and three different curricula as samples in this case study, the amount of time available to spend interviewing and analyzing each was limited. Choosing samples for this case study methodology provided a series of still images to be taken and analyzed, rather than evidence that could have been collected if the researcher was immersed in a classroom (Merriam, 1998).

A major source of data for this case study involved interviews. Limitations of data collection via interviews include the fact that they provide "indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees" (Creswell, 2003, p. 186). Since the design of this study did not allow for direct observation, interviews, although two were done in

classrooms, did not include observing students during the school day. This limited the

opportunity for natural field settings (Creswell, 2003). Other limitations of interviews for

data collection include bias that may be attributed to the interviewer's presence and the

fact that "people are not equally articulate and perceptive" (Creswell, 2003, p. 186). The

teachers and District administrators could have been inhibited by the researcher, as she

was a colleague from their district. Also, those interviewed could have had limited

understanding of SEL in general, and of the nature and needs of gifted learners.

In a qualitative case study, where the researcher is the instrument used in

collecting data, bias may be introduced from the beginning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Aside from setting the boundaries for the case and choosing the samples, the researcher

brought background knowledge to each sample, leaving room for subjectivity. Other

limitations relate to the interview aspect of the research design. The researcher was a

colleague in the same district as the teachers and administrators being interviewed.

Limitations as to the teaching experience and the amount of the teachers' educational

programs and/or any specific PD or knowledge of the nature and needs of their gifted

students also provided study limitations. Since the researcher had no specific experience

or training as an interviewer, she had to utilize her own "instincts and abilities throughout

most of this research effort" (Merriam, 2009, p. 52conclusions made.

In a case study, large amounts of information are gathered for the narratives. In

turn, that information will also be viewed across samples (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Limitations arise when deciding how much of the data reporting should make a story,

how much should be compared with other cases, and what kinds of generalizations can or

should be made (Stake, 2005). Protecting the anonymity of the participants in the samples was another limitation. Since there were not many teachers or schools using SEL in this district during the 2016-2017 school year, it was difficult to remove information that would allow the teachers to be identified. Additionally, inherent in a case study, there were limitations as to exactly what to pay attention to, and what, perhaps, to ignore (Merriam, 2009). As it is impossible to attend to every detail for each curriculum, and limitations to the amount of information that can be recorded, the researcher had to make these decisions along with the decision of how to report the data (Merriam, 2009).

Finally, and perhaps most prominently, one of the major limitations inherent in case study, is being able to generalize from the samples in the case. The analysis and reporting describe snapshots through which these stories were told. There are no guarantees that other teachers using the same curriculum would also see what these teachers perceive and share.

**Significance and Rationale**

This study is attempting to make two main contributions. The first is to add to the literature in an area where there is a gap in the current information. During the literature review of topics related to incorporating social emotional developmental support for gifted students, there was a paucity of studies or articles uncovered that focused on the use of universal curricula for use with gifted learners in heterogeneously grouped classes. In studies focused on the effects of universal SEL on the general population, none of the studies found had disaggregated data relating the impact on gifted learners. The second and possibly more timely significance is that of informing stakeholders of The District, or

case, of this study. As they are poised to make decisions on SEL programming within the next couple of years, it is hoped that this study will enlighten all the stakeholders - District policymakers, administrators, teachers, and parents - about the implications of using universal SEL curricula for meeting the needs of its gifted students. Conclusions from this study will be relevant to The District's decision-makers related to the efficacy of universal SEL curricula for gifted students, and what strategies can be employed to best meet those needs in settings where these students are heterogeneously grouped. Since the goal of case study research is to develop a deep understanding of the case, this study demonstrates that a professional dialogue is needed to ensure that the gifted students' social and emotional needs are placed at the forefront of curricular decisions around the adoption and implementation of SEL curricula. Single case study, used in this research, has been shown to offer an advanced understanding of a phenomenon when the researcher is immersed in the topic, setting, and among the participants being studied (Flyvbjerg, 2006). As a veteran teacher in The District, this researcher fits each of those criterion.

**The Researcher**

The researcher in this study is a veteran of over 25 years of teaching in the district in question. She has been studying and immersed in the world of gifted education since 2006. Throughout that time, and through parenting and teaching experiences, the social emotional developmental needs of gifted learners have been an area of much passion, learning, and concern. Practical experience, course work, conference participation, leading PD, and working with gifted learners allowed the researcher to bring many

varying perspectives to this investigative process. One aspect of experience specifically related to the social and emotional needs of gifted learners involved the researcher training for and co-facilitating parent discussion groups organized by Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG), a non-profit organization. The information found in *Guiding the Gifted Child* (Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1994) and *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* (Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, 2007) launched the researcher's passion for advocating for both academic and social emotional needs of gifted learners.

In the role of gifted advocate, the researcher is aware that some of the experiences leading to this choice of research topic provide knowledge about the topic but may also be a liability. It could lead to bias regarding the design of this research project and in the interpretations of the results and findings. Clarifying the assumptions, limitations, and the theoretical framework at the beginning of this study and engaging in dialogue with professional colleagues, cohort members, and advisors throughout the process are some of the ways that validity and reliability were enhanced in this study. Triangulation of data sources, methods, and again receiving input from others involved in this process were ways of striving to overcome any bias (Creswell, 2003, 2014).

**Definition of Key Terms**

For better understanding of the social and emotional needs of gifted students and the specifics of SEL curricula, it is important to define concepts related to this topic. For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined for their use in this study.

**Affective development.** Social and emotional programming intended to (a) assist gifted students in understanding themselves as gifted learners, and the implications of

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their abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment (intrapersonal skills); and (b)

assist gifted students in developing and/or refining interpersonal skills (Western State

Department of Education Rules for the Administration of the Exceptional Children's Act,

2015).

**Critical design features of curriculum.** The curricular content, objectives, skills,

and expected learning outcomes, student assignments and performance tasks, as well as

any extension activities associated with the curriculum (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

**Curriculum.** The systematically conceived and implemented course of study that

includes the purposes, content, activities, and organization inherent in the educational

program of an organization with the mission of teaching and learning (Woyshner, Watras,

& Crocco, 2004). This includes educational plans, standards and intended outcomes

(Posner, 2004).

**Differentiation.** Modifying curriculum and instruction according to content,

pacing, and/or product to meet unique student needs in the classroom (Tomlinson &

McTighe, 2006

**Gifted and talented.** "Gifted and talented children" are those persons between the

ages of 5 and 21 whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so

exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet

their educational programming needs ("About Gifted Education," 2016).

*A western state's Department of Education definition of gifted and talented.*

**The Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) defines "gifted" children as:** those
persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and
potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that

they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Gifted and talented children are hereafter referred to as gifted students. Children under five who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services. Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic and ethnic, cultural populations. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness:
> general or specific intellectual ability
> specific academic aptitude
> creative or productive thinking
> leadership abilities
> visual arts, performing arts, musical or psychomotor abilities
> ("About Gifted Education," n.d., para. 1)

**Heterogeneous grouping.** Grouping students by mixed ability or readiness levels. A heterogeneous classroom is one in which a teacher is expected to meet a broad range of student needs or readiness levels. This is also referred to as inclusion or inclusive classrooms (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006

**Identification of gifted learners.** Typically occurring at district level, information is collected on a child's performance and potential through a variety of non-biased data which is a combination from both quantifiable and subjective instruments in determining whether a student fits the pre-determined criteria which defines a gifted learner. ("Identification," n.d.)

**Intrinsic case study.** An intrinsic case study is called for when studying a specific organization in which the case is the primary interest of the exploration, rather than the generalizability of the findings (Stake, 1995).

**NAGC.** The National Association for Gifted Children is a national group that supports and develops policies and practices, engages in research and development and

advocates for the diverse expressions of gifts and talents in children and youth from all cultures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups (NAGC.org).

**Programming.** "A coordinated and comprehensive structure of informal and formal services provided on a continuing basis intended to nurture gifted learners" (Purcell & Eckert, 2006, p. 296).

**Psychosocial.** "Of or relating to the interrelation of social factors and individual thought and behavior. Also: of or relating to human cultural evolution" ("Psychosocial," 2007).

**Site-based management.** A system, with its inception as part of school reform initiatives in the 1990s, in which some sort of decision-making group is organized at the school level to make decisions with members from various groups of stakeholders. (David, 1995-1996).

**Social competence.** The condition of possessing the social, emotional, and intellectual skills and behaviors needed to succeed as a member of society (Encyclopedia of Children's Health, n.d.).

**Socio-emotional development**. Those factors from a psychological perspective that assert an affective influence on an individual's self-image, behavior, and motivation; issues such as but not limited to peer relationships, emotional adjustment, stress management, perfectionism, and sensitivity (Moon, 2003, as cited in NAGC 2010b).

**Social emotional learning (SEL).** Social emotional learning is the teaching and/or learning of skills necessary for adequate social and emotional regulation including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal relationships, and

responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2016). Learning that is often considered

noncognitive, non-academic, and may include character education (Duckworth & Yeager,

2015).

> **Whole child.** Considering the interaction of emotional, social, cognitive, in and
>
> physical factors intertwined and influencing each other (ASCD, 2017; Betts &
>
> Housand, 2016; Betts & Neihart, 1988).

**Chapter Summary**

Gifted education research has, for many years, included empirical data showing

the importance of SEL in educating the whole child (ASCD, 2017; Folsom, 2005; Hébert,

2012; Siegle & Schuler, 2000; Reis & Renzulli, 2010; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009).

New legislation, the ESSA, is encouraging the addition of noncognitive measures as part

of its broader accountability system (Blad, 2016). SEL is gaining more attention as a

possibility for inclusion in school report card data (CASEL, 2017). During the era of

NCLB federal education policies, research on test scores from around the country showed

that the "top 10% of the students made either no academic gains or at least smaller

[gains] than those in the middle" (Beisser, 2008, p. 7). This study seeks to understand if

those students in the top 10% of the academic scale will continue to make gains if

universal SEL is their only means of social emotional development support.

This qualitative intrinsic case study focused on a school district in a western state.

The contemporary phenomenon identified for investigation in this study was the use of

universal SEL curricula as the sole means for meeting the particular social emotional

developmental needs of gifted learners. In order to form an in-depth comprehension of a

real-world topic in its actual context, case study was used as the context, and often the related phenomenon are not clearly delineated (Yin, 2009). First, the bounded system forming the case was determined as a specific school district in a western state. Purposeful sampling took place in identifying three schools in which systemic SEL curricula were being employed. The researcher conducted an inductive process of study though the collection of data for the case in general, and the samples within the case. This data included interviews, document analysis, and following the creation of an analytic rubric, the analysis of three specific commercially prepared universal SEL curricula (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The product of this study is findings in the form of rich descriptions of the case and the embedded units within the case (Creswell, 2003, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2012).

The organization and structure for the study's chapters are as follows. Chapter Two, the literature review, explores background information related to the topics being researched for this study. Exploration and analysis are given regarding the theoretical basis for this research, SEL's historical background, and research undertaken to show its impact on students. A section on educational policies related to SEL is also included. Seminal pieces of literature, current primary studies and literature most closely related to the topic areas and findings are analyzed. Chapter Three details the research design of the study. The problem and research questions will be reiterated as well as a detailed description of the community partner. The settings and the participants are discussed, as is the systematic procedure. The steps used in the creation of the Rubric and data collection methods are also discussed in this chapter. Finally, the methods used for data

analysis are described. In Chapter Four, results from the data analysis and the findings are provided. Chapter Five describes the conclusions based on the results, findings, and implications. In this final chapter, interpretation and discussion of the findings will be found, in addition to an explanation of the limitations, implications and recommendations for policy, practice, and research.

**Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

*"Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours."* - John Locke

**Introduction and Background**

The process undertaken for this literature review included searching books related to the social emotional needs of gifted students and using many databases accessed by the University of Denver's Library Compass system. The Compass system allowed searching for books, eBooks, peer reviewed journal articles, published doctoral and master's level works, as well as accessing many other databases and research sites. Some of the databases utilized for this review were accessed via EBSCO, ERIC, Proquest, SAGE, and Academic Search Premier. Five major areas of literature were reviewed for this study: (a) the theoretical footing for this inquiry; (b) a review of SEL literature – its definition, history and utilization; (c) a survey of commercially created SEL curricula; (d) the connections to SEL and the legislation surrounding the accountability of effectiveness in education; and (e) a review of literature related to giftedness and the social emotional needs of gifted learners.

This research was born over concerns that gifted and talented students who spend most or all their school days included in regular education classrooms may not be getting the social and emotional support needed for their unique needs. According to Rogers (2007), as schools across the country moved away from specific programs designed for gifted and talented students, the NCLB legislation often left these students "the least likely to receive any form of attention in classrooms" (p.267). Kamenetz (2015) contends

that money spent on gifted and talented students in many school districts goes towards

identification, yet very little or no monies are allocated for programming. By being

included in regular education classrooms, gifted students rarely get specific support for

their unique social and emotional needs (Hill, 2008; Reis & Renzulli, 2004, 2010).

According to Silverman (2000), "The educational needs of the gifted and highly gifted

are usually neglected, which in turn affects their morale, motivation, social relationships,

aspirations, sense of self-worth, and emotional development" (p. 10). Neihart et al.

(2016a) declare that gaps in current literature related to the social and emotional

development of the gifted point to a paucity of research on this subject. Little is

chronicled about "the efficacy and effectiveness of many of the interventions

recommended for gifted children's social and emotional development" (Neihart et al.,

2016b, p. 286).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this intrinsic qualitative case study is to explore the efficacy of

universal SEL curricula for serving gifted students' social and emotional developmental

needs in a large school district in a western state.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the characteristics of gifted learners addressed by universal social and
   emotional learning curricula?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the universal social emotional
   learning curricula employed in their classrooms for their gifted and talented
   students?

3. How does utilization of universal social emotional learning curricula address the social and emotional needs of gifted students?

**Theoretical Support for SEL**

Affective educational theories, like definitions of giftedness, seem to be plentiful. There are many different theorists whose work supports the specific development of SEL curricula for gifted learners (Moon, 2009). Most of the theories related to the SEL of children in education were not developed with a focus on gifted individuals. Maslow's theories of self-actualization and his hierarchy of needs are two of the theories that are often referred to in the literature (Moon, 2009; Roeper, 1993). Krathwohl's affective taxonomy (Cavilla, 2016; VanTassel-Baska, 1994), Erickson's stages of psychosocial development and Kolhberg's stages of moral development all propose that social emotional development must occur as children move through developmental stages (Ferguson, 2006, Moon, 2009). Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration and overexcitabilities is another theory that Moon (2009) and others suggest strongly provides theoretical support for the social emotional development specific to gifted learners (Colangelo & Davis, 2003; Mendaglio & Tillier, 2006; O'Connor, 2002; Piechowski, 2014a, 2017; Roeper, 1990; Silverman, 2016). According to Grant and Piechowski (1999), "Dabrowski focused on emotional development as being the most essential dimension of human life" (p. 9). These theories, Krathwohl, Erickson, Kohlberg, and Dabrowski's could be argued for, and tailored to, the specific social and emotional needs of gifted learners.

**Constructivism.** Constructivism, specifically social constructivism, is often traced back to the learning theories of Piaget. Creswell (2003) notes that constructivism is a theory with which the researcher tries to understand "specific contexts in which people live and work" (p. 8). According to Stake (1995), qualitative researchers base their work on the views represented through constructivism. It is an educational philosophy known for identifying learning as a social process which can include collaboration in solving real world problems. Participating in group work and discussions is the basis for learning activities in which students construct knowledge together (Palincsar, 2005). When students and teachers collaborate on learning tasks, they are using these social interactions (Palincsar, 2005). In social constructivism, knowledge is co-constructed by both students and the teachers who provide structures for students to learn through verbal interactions (McLeod, 2014). These actions are paramount for SEL; and the underlying theoretical framework of social constructivism is key to the success of SEL (Palincsar, 2005). When working with gifted children, it is also important to remember the work of Vygotsky, who unlike Piaget espoused that it is important to keep learners' zones of proximal development in mind (Morelock & Morrison, 1999). Gifted children with greater potential for development will need activities that challenge them past their independent level, which may be beyond those of their typical peers. While this researcher is incorporating her personal experiences and background into the interpretation of what is being studied, Creswell (2003) suggests that researchers should also use this perspective to look "for complexity of views, rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas" (p. 8). This broader perspective will allow the

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conclusions to come "as much as possible [from] the participants' view[s] of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2003, p.8).

**Social cognitive theory (SCT).** The research undertaken for this study is also supported by the constructivist views of Albert Bandura (1977, 2006) and his social cognitive theory (SCT), originally termed social learning theory. Two aspects of this theory, self-efficacy and the triadic interactions of reciprocal causation, support the use of effective social emotional developmental curriculum for gifted learners. Bandura's (1977, 2006) work, based on that of earlier constructivists, led to the development of his SCT. This theory is found as the basis for the consideration of SEL curricula and the social and emotional needs of gifted students (Bandura, 1977). The backbone of Bandura's (2006) work is that learning occurs in a social construct through interactions with both modeled behaviors and co-construction with classmates. Bandura, arguably one of the most influential psychologists of all time, provides a supporting structure and theoretical basis for SEL in general and for this study (Clay, 2016). Bandura (1977) proposed a theory that observation and interaction with others is paramount to learning. He also was a proponent of the theory that self-efficacy, individuals' control of their emotions and cognition, allowed them to choose self-control, set goals, and achieve them. Bandura (1977) continued by asserting that in social emotional learning, support for the development of self-efficacy provides the means for improving student learning and success. His SCT is based on humans' abilities to act as their own agents in controlling their behavior (Bandura, 2006). This theory focuses on the ability of people to act with intentionality in

regulating their own actions and thoughts, while also participating in learning from the modeling of others' behavior.

Bandura (2006) based his views on the premise that people act in an agentic way. According to Bandura (2006), people, as their own personal agents, act with intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflection. These four areas of agency direct an individual's thoughts and behavior (Bandura, 2006). In a school setting, it is also important to note that his theory encompasses the belief that in addition to people's behavior and cognition, the interplay with their environment provides the third influence for the triadic interaction that he purports leads to human functioning (Bandura, 2006). Bandura's theory is based on "agents proactively engaged in their own development and [believing that they] can make things happen by their actions" (Anderman & Anderman, 2009, p. 93). According to Coleman and Cross (2000), the term social emotional development is more apt in that they contend that emotional development cannot occur outside of a social matrix. It is their assertion that gifted students are agents in their social and emotional growth. With the social and emotional growth of both typical students and gifted students, Bandura's work acts as a support for the use of instruction in this area of learning, often classified as "noncognitive" skills ("Hidden curriculum," 2014).

The SCT also explains human behavior in terms of reciprocal causation from individuals' cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1977). To understand how learning occurs, especially when designing curriculum for students with high levels of cognition, this aspect of Bandura's work interrelates a dynamic which

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exists between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences in the process of learning (Bandura, 1997; Burney, 2008). This facet of Bandura's work allows the learner to "observe others and the environment, reflect on that in combination with his own thoughts and behaviors, and alter his own self-regulatory functions accordingly" (Burney, 2008, p.130).

Burney (2008) sees Bandura's cognitive theory as a solid basis for "curriculum and instructional services for students with exceptional academic ability" (p.130), one that it makes sense to use with groups of learners who have advanced cognitive skills and capacity from their same age peers. Self-efficacy is a basic tenet for social competence; students who have developed self-control are successful at navigating SEL (Bandura, 2006). Since Bandura's work emphasizes that "what people think and feel about themselves affects their own behavior" (Burney, 2008, p.131), and since introspection is often a characteristic of giftedness, a curriculum emphasizing self-reflection makes sense. Another aspect of Bandura's work that lends itself to curricula for gifted learners involves motivation (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Once students achieve high levels of self-efficacy and set and achieve personal goals, their motivation will increase. Increasing levels of self-efficacy would be an important aspect of a curriculum that would benefit gifted learners. With cognition as the central core of Bandura's work, those with greater levels of cognition than their same-age peers fit into the school-based conception of giftedness by Cross and Coleman (2005). This also raises the issue of ensuring that gifted learners have other high ability classmates from whom they can learn vicariously, which is an argument for cluster grouping of gifted students (Burney, 2008).

Much of the research on universal SEL is based on Bandura's theories. His theories say that one of the most consistent predictors of educational success is found in the level of self-efficacy that a student has ("Hidden curriculum," 2014). Bandura (2006) explains that "most human functioning is socially situated; consequently, psychological concepts are socially embedded" (p. 165). Learning occurs when individuals can be in a social environment in which they can observe and interact with others (Anderman & Anderman, 2009). They then become part of the environment of the group, affecting the learning that is taking place. Social emotional curricula, in which opportunities exist for gifted learners to learn from each other, would be an effective example of Bandura's SCT in action.

**Social Emotional Learning**

SEL is often defined as "the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others'' (Zins et al., 2007, p. 192). Researchers from CASEL, such as Roger Weissberg (Durlak et al., 2011; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013, identified academic success and SEL as essential components of "the best possible education so that [students] are knowledgeable, responsible, caring people who contribute and who are going to succeed in postsecondary education and in careers and as good community and family members" (Boss, 2011, "Roger Weissberg" Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (2006) and a founding member of CASEL, encourages educators to "get over our fixation on academic achievement tests as the end-all and be-all of education. We have to remember we're educating the whole child" (Boss, 2011, "Daniel Goleman"). A

large body of research highlighted by CASEL on their website (http://casel.org), in a variety of fields — education, neuroscience, psychology, economics, learning theory, health and classroom management — found positive effects of including SEL into daily classroom instruction. The studies used a variety of methodological approaches using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods in randomized control trials, longitudinal follow-ups, and multiple applications ("Resources," n.d.). None of these studies, however, reported any disaggregated data which may have been able to identify effects for gifted and talented student participants.

The history of universal affective curriculum, or SEL, can be traced all the way back to ancient Greece. Plato's writings included references to holistic teaching as evidenced by a quote from *The Republic*: "By maintaining a sound system of education and upbringing, you produce citizens of good character" ("Social and Emotional Learning: A Short History," 2011). Nel Noddings (2005) cited Thomas Jefferson and John Dewey as identifying one of education's purposes as teaching the whole child. In 2007, ASCD first began their Call to Action, in which they hoped to impact changes in educational philosophy and practice in three ways. They put forth a compact in which they called for education to: (1) encourage nurturing the whole child through educational personalization and engagement, (2) realize that the uniqueness of children has been lost amongst one-size-fits-all education initiatives, and (3) put children and their learning needs as the primary focus for all program and resource decisions (The Commission on the Whole Child, 2007).

The modern exploration of embedding SEL into academic curricula began in the

late 1960s when James Comer began work on an early version of SEL with his Comer

School Development Program (Comer & Maholmes, 1999). In turning around two

struggling schools in Connecticut, he designed a program that changed "school

procedures that seemed to be engendering behavior problems" ("Social and Emotional

Learning: A Short History," 2011, para. 8). Comer's focus on educating the whole child

was instigative in bringing SEL into the classroom on a regular basis. Roger Weissberg

(Duffel et al., 2016; Durlack, et al., 2011, Dusenbury, 2016, 2017; Elias et al. 2004, 2013;

Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013) and Timothy Shriver from Yale established the New

Haven Social Development program between 1987 and 1992. Simultaneously, the W.T.

Grant Foundation run by Weissberg and Maurice Elias (wtgrantfoundation.org) released

a framework for incorporating social and emotional competence in schools and created a

list of emotional skills that were necessary to achieve their goals ("Social and Emotional

Learning: A Short History," 2011).

Goleman (2006) popularized the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) with his

book; but Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004) are credited with first using the term EI

(Basu & Mermillod, 2011). Mayer and Salovey (1997) define EI as:

> The capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking
> includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate
> emotions to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and
> to reflectively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. (p.
> 5)

Mayer et al. (2004) identified five different domains within EI: self-awareness, mood

management, self-motivation, empathy, and managing relationships. Basu and Mermillod

(2011) add that parents and educators found EI important as they worried about increased incidences of major conflicts with children. Basu and Mermillod (2011) continued by sharing that EI was used heavily by businesses in training employees to "increase productivity and profits" (p. 183).

Affective development has had EI as its roots since it was first shared in the world of psychology (Goleman, 2006; Mayer et al., 2004; Moon, 2009). It is possible that some gifted learners, due to intensities of emotion, will become at-risk for problems with naming and dealing with their emotions (Reis & Renzulli, 2004). Moon (2009) suggests that using EI as a foundation for SEL curriculum for gifted students can lead to a greater understanding, expression, and regulation of their emotions. Assessments have been created with which students, including gifted students, can be tested on their status related to EI (VanTassel-Baska, 2009). Helping students become aware of their emotions metacognitively, VanTassel-Baska (2009) continues, can have power in helping gifted students "Understand their own exceptionality, their intensity and sensitivity of feelings, and their need for coping strategies to help them deal with their own perfectionism and vulnerability" (p. 130).

In their reviews of psychological literature, analysis of theory, findings, and implications of studies done on EI, Mayer et al. (2004) shared their four-branch ability model for EI (see Figure 1). These branches include the ability to (a) perceive emotion, (b) use emotion to facilitate thought, (c) understand emotions, and (d) manage emotions. The tests for EI which they created, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso EI Test (MSCEIT) and the multifactor EI Scale (MEIS), are based on these branches. They have conducted

quantitative research on the validity of the answers given on these tests. In their call for

more research, they suggested that empirical studies be done on what kinds of outcomes

can be expected concerning behavioral outcomes if EI is taught to students (Mayer et al.,

2004).
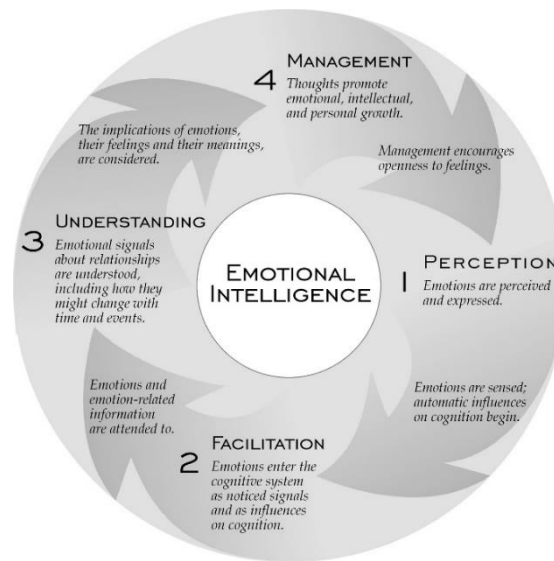


*Figure 1.* The Four Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence (Mayer et al., 2004)

Research conducted by Zins et al. (2007) provided evidence of social emotional

learning contributing to all students' academic success. Their work on SEL defines it as

"The capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and

establish positive relationships with others" (Zins et al., 2007, p. 192). Weissberg and

O'Brien (2004) analyzed not only specific school-based programs for use with all

students (universal) but conducted two major meta-analysis studies which analyzed

programs designed to intervene and teach students "personal and social competencies –

such as self-control, stress management, problem solving, decision making,

communication, peer resistance and assertiveness" (p. 91). They were able to show that

universal school-based programs, those which uniformly included all the students in a

school, lead to improved academic performance. Both studies have been used by CASEL

as evidence to support the championing of SEL curricula for use in schools (CASEL,

2017). Comprising many renowned researchers in the SEL realm, CASEL posits that

with today's increased diversity in schools, SEL has become an essential means for

creating safe and effective learning communities. The diversity in schools today has

many facets, some of which are social, economic, cultural, motivational, and cognitive

differences.

The basic components of EI can be found in most universal SEL curricula, many

of which are highlighted and endorsed by CASEL (2017). CASEL, as an organization,

carries out and supports research on SEL; works directly with schools, districts, and

communities to assist in implementing curriculum; and advocates for SEL at state and

federal levels. The next section will provide background information on this group, with

roots at Yale and its Center for Emotional Intelligence.

**CASEL overview.** Founded in 1994, CASEL's mission is to "help make

evidence-based SEL an integral part of education from preschool through high school.

Through research, practice, and policy, CASEL collaborates to ensure all students

become knowledgeable, responsible, caring, and contributing members of society"

(casel.org/our-work). The research articles supporting their mission cited and contained

on their website (casel.org) provide evidence that supports the importance of deliberately

focusing on supporting students' social and emotional growth, while also teaching

academic content. With today's increased diversity in schools — social, economic,

cultural and motivational — SEL has become an essential means for creating safe and

effective learning communities (NCES, 2016).

The Research and Guidelines Committee of CASEL published a book in 1994 in

which they put together a single comprehensive approach to promote student

competencies in the areas of social well-being and health (Elias et al., 1997). They also

figure prominently in ASCD's 1997 book, *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning:*

*Guidelines for Educators.* In a related manuscript, Goleman published *Emotional*

*Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* in 1995. Goleman's 1995 book connected

SEL in an educational setting with psychology, research neurology, and the development

of human emotion (1995). Basu and Mermillod (2011) discuss affective neuroscience

relating EI as supportive of both "academic achievement and personal well-being" (p.

183). They highlight the important brain growth that takes place from early adolescence

to young adulthood in both physical and emotional growth. "The learning experiences

given during this critical developmental period can positively influence the development

of academic, career and life effectiveness skills" (Basu & Mermillod. 2011, p. 184), thus

supporting SEL. CASEL is championing the introduction of evidence-based SEL

curricula into schools nationwide. CASEL "describes itself as the nation's leading

organization for advancing the development of academic, social, and emotional

competence for all students" (Hagood, 2015, p.8).

The CASEL definition of SEL is as follows:

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is 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. SEL programming is based on the understanding that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful. Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker. Many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying, and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students' social and emotional skills. This is best done through effective classroom instruction, student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom, and broad parent and community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. Effective SEL programming begins in preschool and continues through high school. (Bridgeland et al., 2013, p.16)

CASEL's website outlines the five interrelated Core Competencies that they

assert should be contained in any well-designed curriculum that they endorse, each with

aspects supporting cognitive, affective, and behavioral goals. The framework used for

organizing their resources includes many different learning activities for the classroom,

school, district, and home. The competencies are based on promoting intrapersonal,

interpersonal, and cognitive competence (see Figure 2 below).

**SEL Core Competencies**

**Self-Management**
- Regulating one's emotions
- Managing stress
- Self-control
- Self-motivation
- Stress management
- Setting and achieving goals

**Self-Awareness**
- Labeling one's feelings
- Relating feelings and thoughts to behavior
- Accurate self-assessment of strengths and challenges
- Self-efficacy
- Optimism

**Social Awareness**
- Perspective taking
- Empathy
- Respecting diversity
- Understanding social and ethical norms of behavior
- Recognizing family, school, and community supports

**Responsible Decision-Making**
- Considering the well-being of self and others
- Recognizing one's responsibility to behave ethically
- Basing decisions on safety, social and ethical considerations
- Evaluating realistic consequences of various actions
- Making constructive, safe choices for self, relationships and school

**Relationship Skills**
- Building relationships with diverse individuals and groups
- Communicating clearly
- Working cooperatively
- Resolving conflicts
- Seeking help

SELF-MANAGEMENT · SELF-AWARENESS · RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING · RELATIONSHIP SKILLS · SOCIAL AWARENESS

Social & Emotional Learning

Sources: CASEL, Acknowledge Alliance

SEL Social & Emotional Learning

11/07/2014
Austin Independent School District

*Figure 2*. CASEL Social Emotional Learning Competencies (CASEL, 2014)

**Why social emotional learning.** With the publication of Goleman's (1995) book and the launching of CASEL, the early 1990s saw an increased focus on SEL in education (Hoffman, 2009). In 2003, CASEL noted that there were more than 200 different SEL curricula available for helping youth become more socially and emotionally competent. The infusion of ethical and moral strands in teacher education programs has followed as well (Hoffman, 2009). In their book, *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*, Elias et al. (1997) took the basics of Goleman's EI work and interpreted it for classroom use. They showed teachers how to incorporate emotional skills into teachable classroom proficiencies, while also highlighting specific programs that they visited and analyzed. With a more recent awareness and urgency for student and school safety, discussions and research on the role

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that schools should play in providing support for mental health and well-being have moved to the forefront of education's concerns (Bierman, et al, 2010; Boss, 2011; Cohen, 2006; Duffell et al., 2016). It is not surprising that an organization such as CASEL is being sought out more often to guide schools and districts in the use of research-based curricula, measurement tools, and follow-up studies.

From school-based SEL to the creation of state standards focusing on key elements of high-quality SEL standards, educators and researchers are interested in determining what part SEL plays in contributing to positive atmospheres from preschool to high school (Dusenbury, Weissberg, Goren, & Domitrovich, 2014). George Lucas' Educational Foundation's Edutopia site (https://www.edutopia.org) has pages dedicated to sharing research in the area of SEL (Vega, 2015). Literature in the social sciences provides a plethora of information on what is being implemented in schools, what research has been conducted, the results of those studies, and suggestions for further research in this important realm of teaching and learning. SEL is touted to improve social emotional skills and student behavior with concurrent boosts in academic achievement (Bridgeland et al., 2013; Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, & Merrell, 2009; Denham & Brown, 2010). According to CASEL's site, the push for adoption of SEL curricula has been gaining traction in recent years across the U.S.

**SEL research.** Much research has been undertaken to analyze whether the use of SEL in general education classrooms correlated to or showed causation for increased academic success (Dodge et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2009; Maras et al., 2014; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014; Zins et al.,

2007). These studies were found in the annals of peer-reviewed scientific journals in fields such as psychology, education psychology, education, counseling and human development, as well as neuroscience. Jonathan Cohen (2006) pointed out that in today's educational world there is a paradox about the major goal of schools. While math and literacy skills still dominate most curricular foci, parents and society were saying as early as 2000 that the goal should be to create well-balanced contributing citizens and lifelong learners, with social emotional, ethical, and academic skills (Cohen, 2006). States should be included in the creation of balanced learning goals. In the most recent national Phi Delta Kappa Poll, of the American adults surveyed, only 33% felt strongly that academic preparation should be the main goal of schools in our country (Langer Research Associates, 2016). The same survey showed that 25% of those who answered thought that the focus of schools should be on creating good citizens. Much research has been undertaken on the skills, knowledge, and learning environments needed to build happy, healthy, and engaged learners (Duffell et al., 2016; Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997).

Other research studies have examined the effectiveness of SEL on the academic achievement benefits and increases in the social and emotional welfare of students (e.g., Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2011; Schonfeld et al., 2015). Results from studies have been held up as evidence that supports integrating SEL topics into academic curricula. This would serve to not only increase students' social emotional development, but also lead to increases in their academic achievement (Blair & Razza, 2007; Denham & Weissberg, 2004). Universal SEL curricula, designed for affecting the social emotional development

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of all students, has become a focus for school reform for many years (Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Walberg, 2004; Zins et al., 2004).

This literature also shows that when students were taught how to name, manage, and be in control of their social emotional skills, academic success has followed (Bierman et al., 2010; Maras et al., 2014; Zins et al. 2007). Maras et al. (2014) went so far as to say that "Schools *are* the primary locales to improve the SEL of children" (p. 199). Some conclusions suggest that all students benefit from developing traits such as problem-solving, perseverance, self-control, and other behaviors associated with balanced social skills (Bridgeland et al., 2013; Elias et al., 1997). Universal SEL curricula or programs which are designed for affecting the social emotional development of all students are becoming a means to contribute to the success of students socially, emotionally, and academically (Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Zins et al., 2004).

A comprehensive look at the existing literature revealed a meta-analysis of school-based universal SEL research carried out by Durlak et al. (2011). Through an extensive review of previously conducted studies, these researchers examined 213 universal SEL curricula that involved 270,034 K-12 students for in-depth examination (Durlak et al., 2011). This study appears as a reference in many other studies which examine SEL in general and in some of the research on the affective needs of gifted learners. When SEL was implemented appropriately, this study concluded that a significant increase of 11 percentile point gains in cognition occurred for students from K-12, as measured by grades and achievement tests. Outcomes from this analysis present empirical evidence that the implementation of effective SEL curricula is a suggested

means to both improve healthy social and emotional growth as well as growth in academic domains (Durlak et al., 2011). Evidence suggests that the school-wide implementation of SEL curricula led to "gains across several important attitudinal, behavioral, and academic domains" (Durlak, et al., 2011, p. 417). Conclusions from Durlak et al.'s (2011) analysis states that interventions incorporated into routine educational instruction, delivered by school personnel universally to all students, were the most effective in making gains in student learning. They also concluded that SEL could be effective for all ages of students, from elementary to high school, in rural, suburban, and urban schools. They recognized limitations related to gaps in the research on the effects of SEL for rural districts and the small number of studies analyzing SEL with high school students (Durlak et al., 2011). This study has become a foundation for supporting the implementation of universal SEL to improved social emotional skills, student behavior, and concurrent boosts in academic achievement.

Hoffman's (2009) research focused on the educational reform movement at national, state, and district levels. She showed that when policies and programs focused on the employment of curricular models which built students' emotional competencies, cognitive growth also improved. Hoffman continued to note her agreement with Nodding's (2005) work on the importance of creating caring communities in classrooms. However, Hoffman (2009) was concerned that the SEL movement runs the risk of becoming "another lens that defines educational problems in terms of individual deficits and their remediation," (p. 549) rather than as a permanent reform to educational practices.

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The current push to include SEL curricula and goals into classrooms across the country has been seen in school districts focusing on educational reform, especially in states and districts using the new federal guidelines created by the ESSA (2016). From Zins et al. (2007) to CASEL's website, to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 (Garcia & Weiss, 2016), the development of noncognitive skills were touted as an important goal for education in the 21$^{st}$ Century. It is important to recognize that leaders in the field of gifted education may have pioneered this support for the social emotional development of gifted students since Leta Hollingworth in the 1920s (Silverman, 1990) and Annemarie Roeper in 1940s and 1950s (Roeper, 1982).

Another study CASEL has cited in their advocacy of SEL curricula is one by Bridgeland et al. (2013). These researchers analyzed the results of a telephone survey of 605 preschool through high school teachers across the nation, asking questions related to social and emotional teaching and learning. The design of their study utilized three different focus groups of teachers, each of which helped identify what questions would be asked. Bridgeland et al.'s (2013) study also included 15 one-on-one interviews of middle and high school students from Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. Researchers asked students what they considered good characteristics of engaging instruction. Bridgeland et al.'s (2013) study also included an extensive literature review in the social emotional realm as well as interviews with prominent business people about related topics. This information was included with the results and discussion of their study.

CASEL's report entitled, "The Missing Piece: A National Teacher Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools," highlighted Bridgeland et al.'s (2013) study. The survey results suggested that most teachers who were given the CASEL definition of SEL agreed that SEL was important in their educational settings. Of the teachers who responded to the survey, 93% identified skills related to CASEL's definition as very important or important to them (Bridgeland et al., 2013). Although this study has become very important to support the work of CASEL, it may be difficult to find teachers who do not feel that these factors are important for effective instruction.

Denham and Brown (2010) reviewed many studies done on the effects of social and emotional learning and the successfulness of students, mostly from preschool and into primary ages and a few studies with older students. The conclusions reached through their meta-analysis suggest that children who learn social emotional skills also have increased academic success (Denham & Brown, 2010). For the purposes of these researchers' review, five major areas of SEL were delineated: (a) social awareness, (b) responsible decision-making, (c) self-management, (d) self-awareness, and (e) relationship skills. In the discussion section of their study, Denham and Brown (2010), shared the skills they felt were important, what tools were used for assessing that development, and the programming that was needed to cause the desired outcomes. Their conclusions stated that these outcomes were not ones that would be seen without specific SEL programming. Students were "heavily influenced, even at the neuronal level, by environmental inputs" (Denham & Brown, 2010, p. 673). When the school and classroom

environments support and encourage the intertwining of SEL for academic success, Denham and Brown (2010) provide evidence to support a positive outcome. The conclusions of their study suggest that further research be done, especially studies in which developmental scientists and educators work together. They also strongly suggest that policy-makers take note of the importance of supporting SEL (Denham & Brown, 2010).

Schonfeld et al. (2015) defined SEL in their research as especially promising when it emphasized five specific characteristics. These were teaching children to: (a) identify, label, and understand the emotions that motivate their behaviors; (b) develop empathy and appreciate the interests and needs of others; (c) identify positive solutions to interpersonal conflicts through employing a series of social problem-solving cognitive strategies; and (d) use these social emotional and cognitive skills to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships. This list was used to determine the effectiveness of various SEL curricula during their trial runs for programming instruction for elementary students. This three-year longitudinal study of 24 elementary schools in a high-risk area provided SEL interventions for half of the students and had a control group with the other half. The conclusions from this study included notes by Schonfeld et al. (2015) that it was unlikely students' academic success in the treatment group was impacted by the SEL curriculum alone. They surmised that teaching the curriculum most likely added to the social emotional competence of the students. Further discussion from this study suggests that increased cognitive achievement might be due to increased teachers' skills, classroom management, and the creation of a more accepting classroom

environment (Schonfeld et al., 2015). Schonfeld et al.'s (2015) research contributed to the literature created by the studies of Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2014) and Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2007).

Several other longitudinal studies have been undertaken in which researchers follow students who have participated in school-based SEL curricula into their adulthood (Bierman et al., 2010; Dodge et al., 2015; Hotulainen & Lappalainen, 2011). In their meta-analysis, Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, and Weissberg (2017) created a table displaying many empirical studies that used follow-up periods to determine effect size, percentage advantage, and an estimated lifetime benefit based on the outcome of the intervention. The follow-up periods in this chart range from one year to 18 years after the intervention(s) took place. Categories for the organization of this table include relationships, school status, sexuality, income/employment, criminality, and mental health. With there "being no current empirical standards for judging the magnitude of follow-up effects for interventions designed to promote youth development" (p. 1166), Taylor et al. (2017) note that the studies they have analyzed could be used as benchmarks for researchers in the future.

A different focus for research on SEL was found in Collie, Shapka, and Perry's (2012) study that looked at the effects of teaching SEL on the teachers who were using the curriculum. In their study, they used CASEL's definition of SEL. Collie et al. (2012) cited Payton et al. (2008), who described SEL as the process that includes teaching students to "recognize and manage their emotions; set and achieve positive goals; demonstrate caring and concern for others; establish and maintain positive relationships;

make responsible decisions; and handle interpersonal situations effectively" (p. 6). In their study, Collie et al. (2012), found that perceptions and comfort levels of instituting SEL curricula affected teachers. Their data show that the greater the teacher confidence in utilizing SEL, the greater the likelihood that they would experience less stress, increased efficacy, and increased job satisfaction. However, when teachers first began using SEL, there was a short-term period of negative effects, which should be known and understood by administration and policy-makers who are introducing new curricula. Teachers will need support as they develop and implement efficient classroom practices (Collie et al., 2012).

Maras et al., (2014) used a very succinct definition of SEL based on Zins et al., (2007) research. "SEL is the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others" (Maras et al., 2015, p. 200). Their study outlines a pilot program in which SEL was added to Positive Behavior Interventional Support (PBIS) and Response to Intervention (RtI) programs already in use at the schools in their study. An interdisciplinary team of specialists, social workers, counselors, and school psychologists were used to explore the links between SEL assessment and the interventions that were already in place. One of the assessment tools that was used was the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), used to assess students' skills related to social emotional competence (Maras et al., 2015). This detailed research study led the authors to conclude that when changing approaches in a school, the unique school context, including a variety of needs and resources, is essential to

implementation of interventions such as SEL for it to be effective according to their

criteria (Maras & Thompson, 2014).

In one of the most recently released reports on SEL's effects, Taylor, Durlak,

Oberle, and Weissberg (2017) published the results of another meta-analysis, this time of

82 more recent studies done internationally. This study's focus was on post-intervention

skill development, which was then correlated with outcomes in six different areas:

relationships, school status, sexuality, income and employment, criminality, and mental

health. The follow-up data was collected between 6 months and 18 years from

completing the SEL programs (Taylor et al., 2017). Conclusions were drawn yielding

more empirical evidence demonstrating that SEL interventions "were effective in

promoting positive development trajectories across diverse and global populations"

(Taylor et al., 2017, p. 1159).

Each study discussed above addresses a framework involving the implementation

of skills, within either a set curriculum or possibly a school-based series of interventions,

to increase student self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-

management, and relationship management (Durlak et al., 2011). The studies are based

on various types of empirical research methods. The evidence suggests various results

and has mostly positive conclusions about the use of SEL to increase students' academic

success. When describing effective social emotional instruction, Durlak et al. (2011)

recommend instruction include practices that are sequenced, active, focused, and explicit;

SAFE is the acronym they use. These characteristics, they contend, are essential for any

SEL programming to be effective (Durlak, et al, 2011).

***Limitations of SEL research.*** Limitations related to the effectiveness of SEL

programs came from Jones and Bouffard (2012) at the Harvard School of Education. In a

policy report devoted to educational implications of social emotional learning, they point

out four major areas of concern. First, Jones and Bouffard (2012) worry about short, once

a week lessons that may be squeezed in between other lessons or skipped in favor of

more content that is academic. Second, there is a concern that there will not be enough of

an effort to have students apply their skills outside of the lesson time, or in other "hot

spot" areas around the school. Third, student learning may not transfer to areas such as

the playground, cafeteria, and hallways. Their final concern was that due to limited time,

teacher and staff training might be insufficient for effectiveness (Jones & Bouffard,

2012).

There is most likely one additional component necessary for effective SEL for

either a universal program or one specifically for the gifted. Jones, Bouffard, and

Weissbourd (2013) note that since "student and teacher stress can fuel each other in many

ways," (p.63) it is also important to consider the importance of teachers' social and

emotional skills. In their article in the *Kappan*, Jones et al. (2013) suggest teachers'

prominent roles in SEL instruction depend on their social emotional competencies. There

are environmental concerns as well. "Supportive school cultures not only enhance staff

members' SEL abilities, but importantly, set the conditions for using them effectively"

(Jones et al., 2013, p. 63). Skills that teachers need to learn and practice include "the

ability to listen and empathize, pick up on a subtle social cue, find a student's hidden

strength, or model calm under stress" (Jones et al., 2013, p. 62). Teachers' own SEL

skills are impactful in the classroom. They influence how well the teacher models SEL skills and affect their classroom management and organization. Therefore, defining, valuing, and enhancing these skills will go a long way in supporting the implementation of SEL instruction for students (Jones et al., 2013).

The assumption is that each study highlighted was undertaken in classrooms where students were heterogeneously grouped. As Moon (2009) states, CASEL is an example of an academic center in which theory-driven affective curriculum is developed. None of the research disaggregated results according to whether students were typical, had special learning needs, or were gifted and talented. But, to conclude, Moon (2009) explained that "This work is focused on general population students and on reversing behavior problems, rather than identifying and developing high levels of social emotional talent" (p. 18). The next area for examination in this literature review is an overview of universal SEL curricula.

**Commercially created universal SEL curricula.** There are at least 12 academic centers or organizations that have collected research-based data and information on the creation, implementation, and assessment for SEL curricula in general, including the Center for Social and Emotional Education, Getting Smart, the Aspen Institute, Six Seconds: The Emotional Intelligence Network, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and CASEL (Moon, 2009; Ryerse, 2016). Some of these organizations are housed at universities, such as Stanford, Rutgers, and the University of Chicago; others have familiar names to the field of SEL and positive psychology such as Angela Duckworth and Carol Dweck.

CASEL supports curriculum that includes the five competencies from Figure 2. Inclusion of these factors is how they define well-designed curricula (casel.org). Figure 3 illustrates CASEL's Outcomes from the Five Social Competencies. In the first column are the short-term goals of a well-designed universal SEL curriculum. The second column shows how these goals will lead to a good foundation for students to be better adjusted and to have improved academic performance. Finally, the third column is what CASEL believes will be the positive social behaviors resulting from well-designed SEL curricula ("2013 CASEL Guide," 2013).
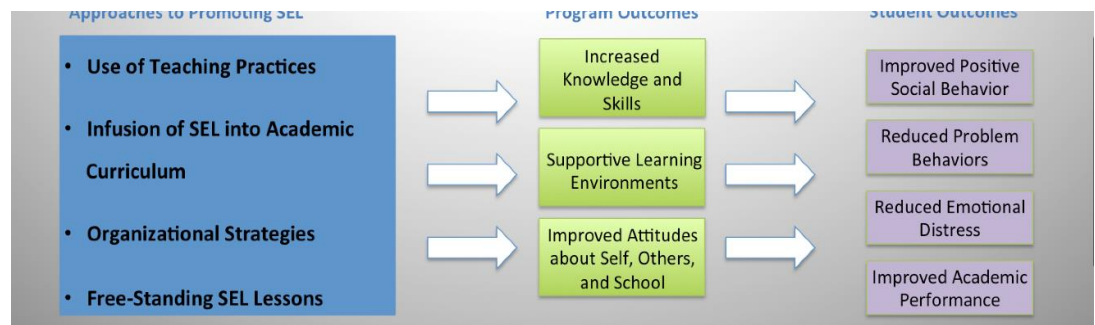


*Figure 3.* CASEL's Outcomes Associated with the Five Competencies (CASEL Guide, 2013, p. 10)

CASEL's researchers recommend a specific process for implementation of any SEL curricula. One major support for CASEL's programming effectiveness is the meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011). Their conclusions included two important considerations for implementation of any SEL that would prove efficacious for enhancement of "learning experiences and outcomes for all students" (casel.org/creating-a-safe-environment-for-learning). One is that the curricula use "the four recommended practices [that] form the acronym SAFE (sequenced, active, focused, and explicit)" of instruction

(DurlakThe second is that the curricula are implemented in a specific sequence of events to avoid any problems with this process. Figure 4 shows a framework that an effective program for SEL should follow. CASEL has these processes embedded in the information provided for school districts in the modules provided by the district framework section of their website (CASEL, 2017).

Figure 4 illustrates CASEL's suggested pathway for implementation of any type of SEL curricula. The first step recommended is creating an implementation team at the school site. This team, according to CASEL, should consist of the school's instructional leader as well as members of the community. Beginning with this step is advised as an important first step in assuring "Readiness" for an SEL program, as shown on the chart in Figure 4. The next suggested step is to conduct a needs assessment, as an assessment should allow the team to use pertinent school data as they review programs or other tools for addressing SEL. CASEL encourages schools in the "Implementation" phase to then conduct staff training preceding the actual SEL program implementation. Staff members, they imply, will need time to adapt to the curriculum and conduct an evaluation of the program. Cycling back to the "Readiness" steps is the conclusion of CASEL's suggested implementation plan (CASEL, 2017).

Social and Emotional Learning Curricula

```
┌────────────────────────────────────┐
│              READINESS             │
│ ✓ School principal commits to SEL   │
│ ✓Steering committee is formed with  │
│   school and community stakeholders │
└────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌────────────────────────────────────┐
│              PLANNING               │
│ ✓Steering committee outlines vision for SEL │
│ ✓Needs assessment conducted         │
│ ✓Data are used to create an action plan │
│ ✓Review and select programs/strategies │
└────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌────────────────────────────────────┐
│           IMPLEMENTATION            │
│ ✓Train school personnel to implement SEL │
│ ✓Implement SEL                      │
│ ✓School personnel adapt and make    │
│   adjustments                       │
│ ✓Evaluate to determine changes that must │
│   be made to accommodate student needs │
└────────────────────────────────────┘
```

*Figure 4.* Recommended framework for implementation of SEL curricula (CASEL, 2017).

**Overview of curricula programs.** In the oft-cited study by Durlak et al. (2011), their meta-analysis of school-based SEL programs evaluated 213 programs that were using universal SEL curricula. Two specific variables in all the successful programs became clear in their analysis. One variable was the programs' use of the SAFE practices. Curricula utilizing the SAFE practices are designed to be sequenced, provide

opportunities for active lessons that focus the learners explicitly on social emotional

skills. One of the hypotheses for the meta-analysis was that multicomponent programs

would be more effective. These components would have been portions of the programs in

addition to the teacher-led parts. Additional portions might have been programs that

included parents, after-school programs, or school-wide initiatives that encouraged

organizational changes. "For example, these efforts might begin with the formation of a

planning team that develops new policies and procedures to reorganize school structures

and then institutes practices to encourage and support students' social and emotional

development" (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 410). In the study's summary, these multi-

component programs were actually less effective, perhaps because each part of the

program would be impacted by differences in the fidelity of their presentations.

Schools utilize many different curricula for SEL. For this study, a review of three

programs already systemically being implemented school-wide will be shared. Two basic

tenets had to be present for each curriculum. First, the curriculum must have been

implemented school-wide. Second, the curriculum must have been commercially created

for universal school usage. Among the schools fitting both categories, three were chosen.

These curricula include Well-Managed Schools, Second Step: Skills for Social &

Academic Success, and Conscious Discipline.

***Well-Managed Schools.*** Well-Managed Schools (Hensley, Powell, Lamke, &

Hartman, 2011) is a commercially prepared universal SEL curriculum published by Boys

Town Press. Historically, this curriculum's conceptual beginnings came from Father

Edgar Flanagan who started the famed Boys Town program in Omaha, Nebraska in 1917.

From its humble beginnings, Boys Town, known as a place in which boys and young

men of all religions and ethnicities could find a welcome and supportive community,

gave rise to this universal curriculum. Flanagan's goal was to give these young men a

foundation in character education through a residential program (Lynch, 2010). As a non-

profit organization, Boys Town's mission statement is "Changing the way America cares

for children, families, and communities by providing and promoting an integrated

continuum of care that instills Boys Town values to strengthen body, mind, and spirit"

(www.boystown.org/about

The Boys Town organization and facilities grew, began providing residential

facilities, and in 1938 received international acclaim when a movie with the same name

won an Academy Award for the leading actor. Father Flanagan began to travel the world

showing leaders how to best support boys from war torn countries. Leadership, passed

down through the years, has also created programs for girls, family homes, a hospital and

support hotline, as well as 12 additional sites across the country. Boys Town has served

millions of American youth through the supports initiated by Father Flanagan over 100

years ago (Lynch, 2010).

Social skill instruction, relationship building, and behavior management are the

goals of the Boys Town Education Model (BTEM), created to extend Father Flanagan's

message into public schools across the country. After use in their residential programs,

Boys Town published the curriculum using both a text and workbook approach (Hensley

et al., 2011). Based on Bandura's SCT and applied behavior analysis, the curriculum has

four basic elements: (1) building relationships with all students, (2) encouraging a sense

of connectedness to school, (3) establishing a safe, positive climate for learning, and (4) empowering every child with the social skills needed to enjoy academic and personal success. The curriculum cites many supporting empirical research studies throughout the text and in the reference section. Measuring success based on decreasing office discipline referrals (ODR), the primary goal is to create "authoritative communities" (Hensley et al., 2011, p. 10).

One research study conducted on Well-Managed Schools explored teacher perspectives on its implementation (Hunt Esco, 2015). Teachers in nine different middle schools, were surveyed over two school years with a tool created by the school district. Hunt Esco's qualitative study analyzed the results of the survey. In it, teachers' perceptions about three areas related to the implementation and use of this curriculum were measured. The study's research questions included questions related to teachers' perceptions of the building level support for the use of the curriculum, teachers' perceptions of their abilities to use the curriculum, and teachers' opinions on whether use of Well-Managed Schools helped to develop students' social skills. After an analysis of the data, Hunt Esco (2015) concluded that in using this curriculum for a character education program, teacher perceptions related to the research were favorable when there was adequate support from building administration; teachers were trained and felt efficacious in their instruction of the program; and believed that implementation under those conditions showed a positive opinion that Well-Managed Schools was a curriculum that could be used to develop students' social skills.

***Second Step: Skills for Social & Academic Success.*** Second Step (Committee

for Children, 2014), created by the Seattle based non-profit Committee for Children, was

originally subtitled "A Violence Prevention Curriculum" (Low, Cook, Smolkowski, &

Buntain-Ricklefs, 2014; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010). First published in 1988, its purpose

was "to increase key areas of social competence to reduce problem-externalizing

behaviors such as physical and verbal aggression" (Merrell & Gueldner, 2010, p. 37).

The founders of the Committee for Children began their work with a program entitled

"Talking about Touching" in the late 1970s, in response to the concerns of child abuse

(www.cfchildren.org/about-us/history). The next iteration of their work, and the first

Second Step curriculum came out in 1985, designed to teach preventative skills to keep

children safe from child abuse. In 1995 Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence*, was

released and national attention was brought to SEL in general ("Discover Our Story",

n.d.). Research on bullying and bully prevention also rose, and Second Step received

positive attention and awards for its programs. Currently, approximately 26,000 schools

in the U.S. and abroad are using Second Step for SEL (secondstep.org, n.d.). The

theoretical basis for Second Step's curriculum is rooted in Bandura's social learning

theory (Frey, Hirschstein, & Guzzo, 2000). Second Step's self-promotions call their

packaged curriculum in the kits "Teacher Friendly" ("Second Step Social Emotional

Learning," n.d.). The most recent edition of the program has added an additional domain

to the original; Skills for Learning have joined Empathy, Problem Solving, and Managing

Emotions. The kits contain 22 lessons organized with teacher cards for getting started, the

lesson itself, and following through activities. Of the three curricula used in this study,

this is the only one included in CASEL's Guide to Effective Programs for Preschool and

Elementary Grades ("2013 CASEL Guide," 2013).

Three different studies, one a dissertation and the other two published in peer-

reviewed journals, analyzed the Second Step curriculum as a violence prevention

program. The first, done by Low et al. (2014), evaluated the elementary program found in

the 4th edition of Second Step. This large study used teacher report data to determine the

effectiveness of the program with 321 teachers, 7300 students, and six different school

districts. Teacher report data was the main source of data collection in this study.

Although the researchers suggested a replication of the study in another setting with other

sources of data, they concluded that 8 out of 11 outcome variables showed significant

change in student behavior for students who began the study with deficits in social skills

relative to their peers. The hierarchical results, however, showed few main effects with

small effect sizes following the Second Step prescribed interventions.

Pedraza (2009) undertook a multi-method, multi-source retrospective case study

to measure the effects on students' behavior related to the implementation of the Second

Step curriculum in six elementary schools in a large urban school district. Data were

collected using a variety of methods, including principal, counselor, and teacher

interviews; focus groups; implementation checklists; and document review.

Implementation factors and partial implementations were analyzed. Conclusions included

that in each case, schools adapted the curriculum to meet their needs, and none

implemented or used the curriculum with fidelity. Recommendations incorporated the

suggestion that an SEL curriculum such as Second Step needed to be able to be

implemented with flexibility and to be able to more clearly recognize individual school's cultures.

A third study on Second Step curriculum researched the use of the middle level program (Espelage, Low, Polanin, & Brown, 2014). This study, a clinical trial, also published in a peer-reviewed publication, investigated Second Step's focus on violence prevention in a two-year cluster randomized examination of its effects in 36 middle schools. Student self-reporting was the main source of data in this study. One of the conclusions of this study was that Second Step "Holds promise as an efficacious program to reduce homophobic name-calling and sexual violence in adolescent youth" (Espelage et al., 2014, p. 52).

*Conscious Discipline.* Conscious Discipline (Bailey, 2015) offers a different take on SEL than the other two curricula. Becky Bailey, PhD., brought her expertise in childhood education and developmental psychology to found Loving Guidance, Inc. and to develop Conscious Discipline. Celebrating its 20th year in 2016, this is a relatively new curriculum. A recent study by the Harvard Graduate School of Education (Jones et al., 2017) even classifies it as a "noncurricular approach" to SEL. It is designed to be a system for both classroom management and SEL. The theoretical roots of this program are based on Piaget's cognitive development, Gesell's Maturational Theory of child development, and Shore, Perry, LeDoux, Goldberg, Siegel, Jensen, and Bremner's neurological research relates studies of the impact that threat and stress have on higher order thinking skills (Bailey, 2018).

The effectiveness in its use with preschool and early childhood students and educators was the focus of many research studies investigating Conscious Discipline (Cadarella, Page,& Gunter, 2012). Early Childhood Educator's Perceptions of Conscious discipline. *Education,132*(3), 589-599.Finn, 2015; Hoffman, Hutchinson, & Reiss, 2009; Hoile, 2016). Philosophically, it is rooted in positive discipline techniques that focus on teaching problem solving skills rather than using external awards of punishment (Jones et al., 2017). According to Bailey (2015), "Conscious Discipline is built on three completely different premises: (1) Controlling and changing ourselves is possible and has a profound impact on others. (2) Connectedness governs behavior. (3) Conflict is an opportunity to teach" (p. 15). The program is based on seven core skills, designed to be taught one per month, but has built-in opportunities for teacher choices. The skills are composure, encouragement, assertiveness, choices, positive intent, empathy, and consequences. Both teacher and student behavior modification are built into this program, setting it apart from the other two.

**Social Emotional Learning and Educational Policies**

Many in education attribute modern educational philosophy to John Dewey (Campbell, 2016). Dewey argued that the purpose of education was not to fill students' heads with a series of facts, but to teach them to think so that they could problem solve for themselves as they grew and learned (Campbell, 2016). Noddings (2005) also questioned the purpose of education. She illuminated the critics' perspective of NCLB as an unfunded mandate attempting to attain the impossible goal of 100 percent of students attaining grade level in both math and reading by 2014, via methods of punitive

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consequences (Noddings, 2005). Noddings called for schools to "allow teachers and students to interact as whole persons…[with] policies that treat the school as a whole community. The future of both our children and our democracy depend on our moving in that direction" (Noddings, 2005, p. 13).

Noddings' comments came following the educational focus changes of the 1980s and 1990s. The emphasis changed to valuing the products of learning and the meeting of standards, with the goal of proficient test scores and other assessments taking hold (Stuckart & Glanz, 2010). In 1995, the federal government encouraged school districts across the country to focus on new goals for student learning. In reauthorizing the ESEA, accountability towards the establishment of standards' achievements that were measured using criterion referenced tests shifted the goals towards that of acquiring specific pieces of knowledge (Stuckart & Glanz, 2010, p. 7). Then, in 2001, Congress (NCLB, 2002) passed NCLB, another reauthorization of the ESEA. Focusing on measuring intelligence or school success within the realms of only reading, writing, and math proficiencies drove the definition of school success for more than the next decade (Cohen, 2006). Title I funds were used to incentivize this new reform; if districts put these new assessment measures into place, federal dollars would be provided to supplement programming for students at high risk due to low-income (NCLB, 2005). Due to NCLB and states being able to choose their own testing standards, the students receiving the most attention in schools were the "bubble" students, those just below proficient whose scores could more easily be raised to proficient (VanTassel-Baska, 2009). This focus also "succeeded in wiping off the radar screen any interest in gifted students, leaving them the least likely to

receive any form of attention in classrooms" (VanTassel-Baska, 2009, p. 267). SEL for

any students took a backseat to measures of students' cognitive skills.

Federal guidelines for improving public school outcomes took a new turn with the

passage of the ESSA in December of 2016 (Blad, 2016). This replacement for NCLB was

expected to officially take effect for the 2017-2018 school year (Klein, 2016). Rather

than states and districts utilizing interventions for achieving proficient scores in the

cognitive skills of mathematics and literacy, this law will allow local control in choosing

other noncognitive areas to show improvement (Klein, 2016). Blad (2016) reports that the

ESSA requires some type of noncognitive factors in addition to the traditional content

based testing data. Suggested choices include measures of student and teacher

engagement, "student access to and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary

readiness and school climate and safety" (Blad, 2016, "Meaningful Differentiation").

These reform efforts have added SEL as one possibility for inclusion in the

formula for measuring student success (Federal Policy, 2016). In an interview for the

National Education Association's (NEA) website, Angela Duckworth agrees that SEL is

an important focus for schools; yet, she cautions against using SEL measures for

determining schools' success (Walker, 2016). "Given the intense visibility and

enthusiasm around growth mindset, grit, and other personal skills, it is important for

school leaders and policymakers to realize that while there is great benefit to studying

and assessing these attributes, the measures should not, currently, be used for broader

accountability purposes" (Walker, 2016, para. 8

Interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are often part of what researchers consider noncognitive skills (Gabrieli et al., 2015; Renzulli, 2013). These often include such skills as persistence, creativity, self-control, problem solving, and social skills in general (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). There are difficulties related to the use of measures of noncognitive or soft skills (Whitehurst, 2016). These include recent decades' focus on a small set of cognitive skills, the difficulty of measuring students' noncognitive abilities, determining what sets of skills should be measured, the definitions of those skills, and the levels of those skills that should be attained (Garcia & Weiss, 2016). Simply coming up with an agreed upon list of these skills, determining which skills are best supported at home, at school, both or other settings, and whether the skills can truly be labeled as cognitive, noncognitive, overlapping or somewhere on a continuum, are other complications with setting up specific policy changes in this realm (Garcia & Weiss, 2016). Concerns about ensuring that staff with expertise in areas of mental and emotional health in addition to teachers is also seen in the creation of new tools with which to measure attainment of these skills, which may also be hereditable traits and dispositions (Whitehurst, 2016). Even though there are moves being made to support the inclusion of these skills at all levels of educational policy, "Still by far the greatest emphasis in policy – remains on traditional cognitive skills, with little alignment across the two areas" (Garcia & Weiss, 2016, p. 5).

In the realm of social emotional development for gifted students, this state's Department of Education, in accordance with the Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA), has published guidelines that took effect with the ECEA on June 1, 2015. This

technical assistance document states that "It was the intent of the General Assembly that:
(a) Evidence-based practices support instruction and the social-emotional development of gifted children" (HB 14-1102, 2015).  ALPs are legal documents "outlining programming for identified gifted students and is used as a guide for educational planning and decision-making" ("Advanced Learning Plan"in as western state's ECEA of 2015 (12.01(3),

> "Affective Development" means social and emotional programming intended to: a) assist gifted students in understanding themselves as gifted learners, and the implications of their abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment (intrapersonal skills); and b) assist gifted students in developing and/or refining interpersonal skills. (12.01(3)

If a district does not have specific programming in place for its identified gifted students, this part of the legal document may not be viably addressed in the school setting. This void in services is a portion of what is addressed in this study. With the lengthy educational focus on basic cognitive skills, particularly those in mathematics and literacy, changes in the way that learning will be measured and what schools will be held accountable for could open a window for implementation of SEL for gifted students. This study is aiming to determine whether universal SEL will be efficacious for gifted students included in heterogeneously grouped classes.

**Definitions of Giftedness**

Beginning with the advent of the 20th century, "advancements in education and psychology brought empirical and scientific credibility to the field of gifted education" (A Brief History of Gifted and Talented Education), pioneers in the empirical research on gifted people. Terman's research concluded that affective qualities differentiated gifted men who became successful and those who, with equal intelligence but lacking in self-

confidence, drive, and social adjustment, did not achieve as much (Strodtbeck, Terman, & Oden, 1960Hollingworth (1926) published what is considered the first textbook on gifted education and devoted an entire chapter to discussion of the psychological traits of the gifted. She discusses Terman's research and explains that when looking at the gifted child, their temperament combined with their intellectual abilities equate to their character. In the social evaluation of an intellectually gifted person, she explains that temperament is an important attribute. According to Cross (2011), "Once we know a little about who gifted children are, it is important for us to use that knowledge to help them function successfully in their environment" (p. 65).

Before delving into the literature on the social and emotional needs of gifted learners, it is important to define what the term gifted denotes. In the history of gifted education, there has not been one specific agreed upon definition used ("Definitions of Giftedness," n.d.). The basis for this difference can be traced to the fact that,

> The field of gifted education is characterized by not one, but many belief systems, there is a considerable variation from state to state and school to school in definitions of giftedness, identification of students for special services, programming delivery models, curriculum and instructional practices, and guidance and counseling practices. (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2013, p. 13)

One often-used definition comes from the Columbus Group (Morelock, 1992). The definition of gifted expressed by them is:

> Giftedness is *asynchronous development* in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in

order for them to develop optimally (Morelock, 1992, Defining Giftedness from Within).

These risk factors can compromise or block their capacity for reaching their higher potential (Reis & Renzulli, 2004).

### NAGC's definition.

Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports). The development of ability or talent is a lifelong process. It can be evident in young children as exceptional performance on tests and/or other measures of ability or as a rapid rate of learning, compared to other students of the same age, or in actual achievement in a domain. As individuals mature through childhood to adolescence, however, achievement and high levels of motivation in the domain become the primary characteristics of their giftedness. Various factors can either enhance or inhibit the development and expression of abilities. (NAGC, 2010c, para. 1-2)

### Federal definition.

Gifted and talented children" means those persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. (About Gifted Education, CDE, 2016, para. 1).

### A western state's Department of Education (CDE) definition of gifted and

### talented.

"Gifted children" means those persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Gifted and talented children are hereafter referred to as gifted students. Children under five who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services. Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice-exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic and ethnic, cultural

populations. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness:

- general or specific intellectual ability
- specific academic aptitude
- creative or productive thinking
- leadership abilities
- visual arts, performing arts, musical or psychomotor abilities ("About Gifted Education," n.d., para. 1)

**A western state's Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA).**

The ECEA, in the western state's Revised Statutes, gives rules for ensuring that all exceptional students in the state will receive appropriate supports to ensure their learning. This includes those with special education needs and gifted learners. In the rule's definitions, "affective development" for gifted learners is defined as "Social and emotional programming intended to: assist gifted students in understanding themselves as gifted learners, and the implications of their abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment (intrapersonal skills); and assist gifted students in developing and/or refining interpersonal skills" ("Rules for Administration," 2016, pp. 98-99). Changes in the 2014 legislative session amended the rules to include that "Evidence-based practices support instruction and the social-emotional development of gifted children" (CDE, EDAC Minutes., 2014). Other aspects of this latest revision that relate to gifted students include changes in the rules so that gifted students will be supported with programs and **services that will ensure rigorous learning environments to develop their strength areas. There is also a provision regarding procedures for identification which will be more inclusive of socioeconomic, twice exceptionality, and diversity in culture and ethnicity. Recently revised, all rules applicable for special education students were**

**organized in Part 1 of the statute, and those pertaining to gifted learners were**

**placed into Part 1 to make the Act more user-friendly for all stakeholders (HB 1077,**

**2017). These rules were provided to give the administrative units a framework from**

**which to creat**e and amend their gifted programming ("Laws and Regulations," n.d.).

**Definition of giftedness- from study district.**

PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED STUDENTS: In [the district] talented and gifted
(TAG) students are defined as those from kindergarten through twelfth grade
whose demonstrated or potential abilities are so outstanding that it becomes
essential to provide them with qualitatively different educational programming.
Students are identified using multiple criteria. Programming is designed to meet
cognitive and affective needs through opportunities for acceleration, complexity
of thinking and in-depth learning. Individualized programming and goals are
documented in an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) or Individual Career and
Academic Plan (ICAP). TAG students include gifted students with disabilities
(i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all
socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural populations. TAG students are capable of high
performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue
of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness:
- General or specific intellectual ability.
- Specific academic aptitude.
- Creative or productive thinking.
- Leadership abilities.
- Visual arts, performing arts, musical or psychomotor abilities.
(File: IGBB-R Adopted: September 27, 2006 Revised: June 9, 2008; May 2, 2012,
September 2, 2015)

**Roeper's definition.** Giftedness as a set of innate characteristics is

the basis of Roeper's (1982, 1990, 1993, 1995) philosophical stance on the gifted learner.

"Giftedness is a greater awareness, a greater sensitivity, and a greater ability to

understand and transform perceptions into intellectual and emotional experiences"

(Roeper, 1982, p. 21). As the Roeper school continues to operate on this philosophy, their

website states that "Giftedness is the asynchronous development in which advanced

cognitive ability and heightened intensity combine to create an inner experience and

awareness that are different from the norm" (www.roeper.org, "Identifying giftedness").

Together, Annemarie and George Roeper operated from the position that qualitative

measures, such as IQs, were not sufficient to identify gifted children. Their belief was

that many non-measurable qualities made up who gifted children truly were (Schultz,

2016).

      **Other frameworks for giftedness.** According to NAGC, there are quite a few

frameworks used for defining giftedness, including Robert Sternberg's Theory of

Successful Intelligence and Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligence. The

frameworks of François Gagné and Joseph Renzulli are two that figure most prominently

on the NAGC website (http://nagc.org). These last two have their theoretical supports

rooted in student performance and accomplishment.

      *Gagné's definition.* Gagné's framework, the Differentiated Model of Giftedness

and Talent, defines giftedness as an expression of innate ability in at least one domain of

ability to the point of the individual being among the at least top 10% of age peers in that

field or fields (Gagné, 2003). In this version of his model, Gagné designates the "four

aptitude domains [as]: intellectual, creative, socio-affective and sensorimotor" (p. 61). He

continues to define talents as:

> GIFTEDNESS designates the possession and use of outstanding *natural*
> abilities, called aptitudes, in at least one ability *domain*, to a degree that places
> an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers.
> TALENT designates the outstanding mastery of *systematically developed*
>  abilities, called competencies (knowledge and skills), in at least one *field* of
> human activity to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10%
> of age peers who are or have been active in that field. (Gagné, 2003, p.60)

### *Renzulli's definition.*

Joseph Renzulli (1978) first published a definition of his

three-ring conception of giftedness in an iconic article in the *Phi Delta Kappa*. He

described gifted behaviors in the identification of gifted learners outside of the, then

common, high intelligence test scores (Renzulli, 2003). The rings representing above

average ability, creativity, and strong motivation as demonstrated by high task

commitment, as seen in Figure 5, were then embedded in a houndstooth background. This

background represents an interaction between the individual's personality and

environment. Renzulli prefers to use gifted as an adjective to describe learner behaviors,

rather than as noun (Renzulli, 2009). He saw a connection between his descriptions of

gifted behaviors as being framed within the positive psychology movement led by Martin

Seligman (Renzulli, 2003). Thus, his work on his triad model led him to ask some

pointed questions about what leads some to exhibit gifted behaviors, which put "a

positive perspective on developing social intelligence" (Renzulli, 2009, p. 79). One of his

questions was: "Why do some people mobilize their interpersonal, political, ethical, and

moral realms of being in such ways that they place human concerns and the common

good above materialism, ego enhancement, needs for control and power, and self-

indulgence?" (Renzulli, 2011, p. 307).
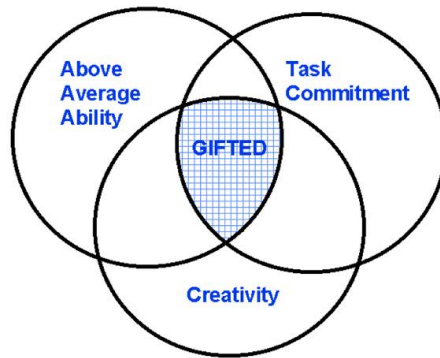
*Figure 5.* Renzulli's Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness (Fioriello & Says, 2017).

Key in the formation of his Operation Houndstooth's framework are the six scientific

components, which Renzulli (2009) has pinpointed as interacting with each other as co-

cognitive factors. The factors include:

- Optimism – the belief that the future holds good outcomes

- Courage – integrity and strength of character

- Romance with a topic/discipline – passion for a topic or discipline

- Sensitivity to human concerns – altruism and empathy

- Physical/Mental Energy – willingness to invest in a goal

- Vision/Sense of Destiny – internal motivation and self-efficacy (Renzulli, 2009,

  pp. 88-89)

Each of the factors above need to be internalized and instilled in students through "no

silver bullet or institutional fix" (p. 109). But, schools can provide interventions that are

based in psychology, sociology and anthropology research education

**Social Emotional Learning for Gifted Students**

In the introduction to the latest version of their book, *When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers*, Galbraith and Delisle (2015) discuss the research they use to support their text. They explain that many of the studies they use are not new, and some are old by research standards. Their explanation is, "That's because – unfortunately – very little new, substantive research has been done about gifted kids and their needs…we've included them [the old studies] because the results or information are still relevant" (p. 5). Delisle, when asked if he would be publishing a newer version of this book, *Guiding the Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Youth* (1992), stated that "except for some new references, the content would be much the same" (J. Delisle, personal communication, July 20, 2017). Cross (2011) relates that there are topics related to giftedness that have sizeable research supports, others have acceptable amounts, and some topics have few or no research to back them up. This may be one area of educational research where experts' "professional experiences become [their] primary source of data" (Cross, 2011, p. 76).

Coleman et al. (2015) synthesized 25 years of phenomenological studies documenting the lived experiences of gifted students in school. The studies they analyzed showed that gifted students often discussed how they felt different from their same-aged peers in the pace of their learning, their interests, and their abilities. According to the qualitative analysis, Coleman et al. (2015) conclude that "Gifted students sense their differentness. They recognize that they learn faster and have abilities and interests that non-gifted peers do not. In typical school settings, [this] differentness pervades their

lives" (p. 372). Gifted students' high levels of cognitive abilities do not necessarily point to specific noncognitive similarities, often because their environments play important roles in their social development (Neihart et al., 2016).

The effects of SEL on the outcomes of day-to-day education has been shown as a promising area for research (Brackett & Rivers, 2014, Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Hoffman, 2009; Schonfeld et al., 2015). If the emotional and relationship interactions in a classroom have affected how and what has been learned, and SEL programs have created a more positive atmosphere in which learning takes place, then its inclusion may have a powerful effect on academic achievement (Vega, 2012; Zins et al., 2007). Further research on exactly what the benefits are for gifted and talented students, especially those who live in high-risk settings and who are twice-exceptional, would be very important to uncover (Maras, Thompson & MacFarlane, 2016; "Nurturing Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children", NAGC, 2009).

In many ways, the teachings and writing of pioneers in gifted education regarding the social and emotional development of gifted learners are echoed in the current writings. The works of Hollingworth (1927) and Roeper (1982, 1990, 1993) have infused the research and literature on the social emotional development of gifted learners today. There is evidence from their work that suggests that the SEL educational trend may have begun with effective instruction for gifted and talented learners. Folsom (2005) connected the bases of SEL for regular education students with SEL for gifted learners. In presenting her theoretical framework, "Teaching for Intellectual and Emotional Learning" (TIEL), she used the St. Louis Arch as a metaphor for connections between

gifted education and general education. One side of the arch represents general education and gifted education is represented by the other side. She posited that during the early 2000s, gifted educational research in SEL contributed to best practices in regular education, when the two approaches to curriculum development came to an all too infrequent meeting, represented by the meeting of the two sides of the arch. Renzulli (2012) illuminated the connection of years of gifted education goals and foci with that of the current general education embrace of 21st Century skills. These skills encompass many of the noncognitive skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and communication; in addition to adaptability, self-direction, and social skills ("A Framework for 21st Century Learning," n.d.). Sternberg's work is also mentioned by Renzulli when discussing the balance between intrapersonal and interpersonal skills that have "been the centerpiece of gifted education for many years" (Renzulli, 2012, p. 152).

Noting that five factors greatly impact the lives of gifted children regarding the ways they feel, think, and behave, Blackett and Webb (2011) conclude that these factors are rarely included in current research on gifted children. The first factor pertains to different levels of giftedness. Blackett and Webb (2011) explain that there are five levels of giftedness. Level one, or moderately gifted students, are most commonly found in public schools, often in regular education classrooms. Level two students, or moderately to highly gifted, may also be found in mixed-ability classes, yet are often two years ahead of their same-age peers. Highly to exceptionally gifted children are classified as level three gifted. These students often do not have same-ability peers in their classrooms. Level four children primarily score in the 99th percentile on standardized tests and are

many grade levels ahead of their same-aged peers. Level five learners are considered

profoundly gifted and are often at the high school level equivalencies by the age of 7 or 8.

The second and third factors, Blackett and Webb (2011) suggest, are

asynchronous development and overexcitabilities, both of which will be discussed below.

Factor four has to do with a difference in thinking and learning styles, which also may

involve perfectionist tendencies. Their fifth factor is that of the forced-choice dilemma.

This pertains to a gifted child having to face the dilemma of their opinions or views being

counter to that of most of their peers or societal cultural norms. After presenting these

factors, Blackett and Webb (2011) explain how SENG model parent groups work, the

topics covered, and the support they can offer the parents of gifted children.

Plucker and Callahan (2014) discuss the status of current research and ideas for

future investigation related to gifted education. In summarizing what research has

recently been done and analyzing strengths and weaknesses of both conceptual and

empirical advances, they also point to areas needing additional research. Despite

extensive published research on SEL for general education students and much other

empirical evidence related to the social emotional needs of gifted students, there is a

knowledge gap in research about whether SEL programs will have positive effects on the

needs of gifted students. Robinson and Reis' forward in the second edition of Neihart et

al.'s (2016) book, *The Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children*, also

question if there is sufficient research "being conducted here and abroad on social

emotional development" (pg. xiii) of gifted students. No current research is being

conducted to demonstrate that teachers of heterogeneously grouped classrooms will

employ universal SEL curricula effectively in order to meet the needs of their gifted and talented students. Educational research is also rarely designed to compare outcomes for gifted versus non-gifted research subjects. Unless teachers have specific study about the nature and needs of gifted learners, the opportunity for then to benefit from research-based SEL programs will not be understood. Neihart et al. (2016) specifically state that little is known about "the efficacy and effectiveness of many of the interventions recommended for gifted children's social and emotional development" (p. 286).

Emotional intelligence, social emotional learning, and the psychological aspects of human emotion, intersect when studying the social emotional needs of gifted students (Cross, Cross, & Frazier, 2013). There is a long history of research on the social and emotional development and needs of gifted and talented learners (Betts, 1985; Borland, 1989; Delisle, 1991; Hollingworth, 1927; Neihart et al., 2002; Roeper, 1982). In one of her seminal writings regarding gifted children, Roeper (1982) illustrates how gifted children understand the world around them differently from their same-age peers. According to Gallagher (2003), by virtue of their giftedness, these youngsters bring with them specialized needs for social and emotional support. Gifted students being taught in heterogeneously grouped classrooms where the intent is for all teachers to differentiate the learning needs of these students may be working with teachers who have had little or no training (VanTassel-Baska, 2009). All staff members should be given instruction on differentiating instruction, including how best to meet the social and emotional needs of the students who face different issues than those of typical students (Schuler, 2012).

Hollingworth, in the 1930s, recommended "emotional education for the gifted [would] help them deal with special problems that beset them in early years" (as cited in Silverman, 2009). Hollingworth also stated, "To have the intellect of an adult and the emotions of a child combined in a childish body is to encounter certain difficulties" (as cited in Colangelo, 2012). In a conference presentation, Dr. George Betts discussed the emotional needs of gifted students. Since gifted students may feel disenchanted in school, it is important that affective components be included to effectively teach academic components (

**Guiding principles for gifted SEL programs.** In the second edition of the book *Designing Services and Programs for High-Ability Learners*, Neihart (2017) summarizes the latest research related to the social emotional needs of gifted learners. She encapsulates these in creating three guiding principles which should be followed in the creation of gifted programming. The first principle is, "There is no substitute for challenge in the curriculum and interactions with others with similar interests, ability, and drive (e.g., true peers)" (p. 123). Negative effects, she purports, occur when gifted learners are not presented with enough challenge and the ability to work with their academic peers. Her second principle is that there is no magic program which will meet the social and emotional needs of all gifted students. As has been pointed out here, there are truly more differences between gifted learners themselves than between the gifted and typical classmates. Thus, differentiation of any type of SEL is necessary, not just for gifted learners, but also based on the diverse needs they have. Finally, her third principle is "that provisions must be designed systematically and purposively and based on the best

available evidence" (p. 123). She further explains the importance of including all stakeholders in determining which policies and practices, backed by empirical data, are best employed for meeting these learners' needs.

**Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG).** In 1981, a group was formed to provide social and emotional support for the families of gifted children. It was born from the tragic deaths of two highly gifted young men and the opportunity to share concerns for the emotional wellness of gifted youth on a national talk show (Webb, 2014). SENG was established as "an association of educators and psychologist to support the unique needs of gifted children and their families" (Webb, 2011, "About Us"). Originally housed at Wright State and then Kent State, SENG became its own entity in the late 1990s and is an established 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. Their mission, found on the SENG website (sengifted.org), is "To empower families and communities to guide gifted and talented individuals to reach their goals: intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually" (sengifted.org, "About Us"). According to Karnes and Nugent (2004), its creation was one of the critical events in the history of gifted education. Today, SENG's goals have expanded to also focus on supporting gifted adults' social and emotional needs.

As this organization has matured, it now offers a wide range of services related to the social and emotional needs of the gifted. Resources needed for the creation of nurturing environments which will lead gifted individuals to social competence and positive mental health include a website, social media presence, and encyclopedic resource base for parents, caregivers, educators and educational researchers. "By

underwriting, and providing education, research, theory building, and staff development, SENG promotes environments where gifted individuals can develop positive self-esteem, thrive, and utilize their talents" (sengifted.org, "About Us").

As the founder of SENG and an influential member of the gifted community, Dr. James T. Webb has been an important author, publisher of books, speaker, and workshop presenter focused on the unique social and emotional needs of gifted children (Karnes & Nugent, 2004). His SENG Model parent groups are perhaps SENG's hallmark contribution to the welfare and support of gifted children, their schools, families, and communities. These groups allow parents to "share common experiences and 'parenting tips' under the guidance of trained facilitators" (Webb et al., 2007, p. 316). By creating an awareness of the social and emotional supports needed for gifted individuals, the people closest to them are more able to support the development and expression of their abilities and talents (Karnes & Nugent, 2004). Hundreds of thousands of parents and educators, in the U.S. and internationally, have participated in these powerful groups.

**Social emotional development of gifted learners**. According to Neihart (2017), for learners to have a positive sense of well-being and to be able to achieve at high levels, there are "psychosocial conditions that must be met" (p.122). She continues to explain that "These needs influence all other aspects of development and involve intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies, self-esteem, self-regulation, and self-beliefs" (p. 122). For gifted individuals to develop their talents to their fullest, many researchers and experts in the field of gifted education have shown that developing these

competencies are integral (Cross & Cross, 2011; Dweck, 2012; Neihart, 2017; Subotnik, Worrell, & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2016).

Reis and Renzulli (2004) recommend some "interventions to promote healthy social emotional development in" (p.123) the gifted population. Among their recommendations come suggestions for the support of academic approaches (i.e. acceleration; clustering for abilities, interests, and motivation; time spent with others of similar abilities) and the inclusion of social emotional curriculum. More specifically, Reis and Renzulli (2004) suggest that teachers model positive behaviors such as kindness, caring and concern for others, and giving positive feedback for appropriate behaviors. Additionally, their recommendations encourage educators to teach problem solving and "develop and implement affective curriculum units in areas such as conflict resolution, decision-making and leadership" (Reis & Renzulli, 2004, p. 124). These elements can be found in most research-based general SEL curricula (CASEL, 2016).

In supporting gifted students, many factors enter the choices that school districts and schools make in providing programming for their gifted and talented students (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2013). Figure 6 illustrates how districts make decisions related to gifted programming funds. The use of a continuous circle suggests that there is an alignment between a school district's philosophy and definition of gifted education; its identification process; programming and service delivery methods; curriculum and instruction; and a needs assessment/program evaluation component (Callahan & Hertberg-Davis, 2013, p. 3). Additionally, J. Cross et al. (2013) point out that the support

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gifted programming receives from both students and educators can make all the

difference in the world towards its success.

Program
Evaluation/Needs
Assessment

Philosophy/Definition
of Gifted Education

Curriculum and
Instruction

Identification Process

Programming and
Service Delivery
Method(s)
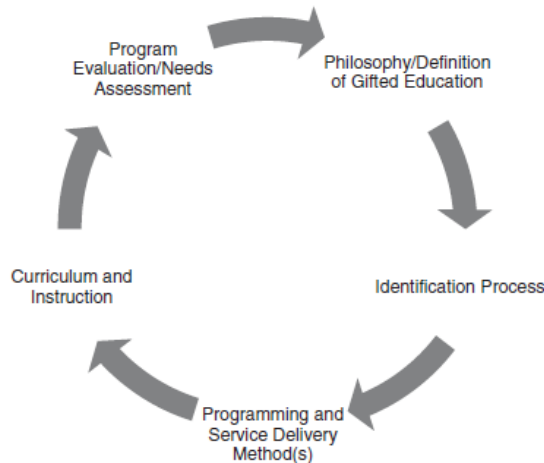
*Figure 6.* Decision-making process in designing an aligned gifted program (Callahan &

Hertberg-Davis, 2013, p. 3).

Without support, from school boards, district administration, principals, and

classroom teachers, gifted students' social emotional development often gets little or no

attention. In this western state, all talented and gifted students are mandated, after the law

in 2015, to have an ALP ("ALP," 2014). As part of this learning plan, each student, along

with his/her stakeholder group (teachers, parents/guardians, and student), are to create

one goal for academic growth in the student's identified gifted area of strength, and one

for affective development. When districts make hard choices in funding allocations,

districts may not have the staff to effectively guide the creation of ALP goals or provide

specific social emotional curriculum for meeting the affective goals (Kendziora & Yoder,

2016). Without research based knowledge about social emotional learning, it often proves difficult for students to understand what affective goals should be on their own (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). Without specific training in SEL or gifted education, it is also difficult for teachers to assist in the attainment of the affective goals once they are set (Buchanan et al., 2009).

**Krathwohl's Taxonomy of Affective Objectives and the Gifted.** Benjamin Bloom and colleagues developed and published taxonomies for learning in the mid-1950s (Krathwohl, 2002). What educators see today as his classic creation, a taxonomy of cognitive measures, was only part of his original work. There were three original parts to his taxonomy: (1) the cognitive or intellectual processes, (2) the skills or psychomotor domain, and (3) attitudes and values or the affective domain (Krathwohl, 2002). Krathwohl's affective taxonomy, shown in Figure 7, goes from simple to complex and concrete to abstract like the more well-known Bloom's Taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002). It is the most well-known of all the affective taxonomies (Bilash, 2011). Bilash (2011) notes that, "The taxonomy is ordered according to the principle of internalization. Internalization refers to the process whereby a person's affect toward an object passes from a general awareness level to a point where the affect is 'internalized' and consistently guides or controls the person's behavior" (para.1). VanTassel-Baska (1994) took Krathwohl's Taxonomy and adapted it to illustrate topics she felt were essential to be included in gifted curriculum.

| *Level One:*<br>**Receiving** | Ability to learn from others |
| --- | --- |

| Level Two: **Responding** | Ability to participate responsible, respectfully, and actively as appropriate to the context |
|---|---|
| Level Three: **Valuing** | Ability to associate personal and collective values with contextual experience and express value judgments |
| Level Four: **Organization** | Ability to structure, prioritize and reconcile personal and others' value systems |
| Level Five: **Characterization by a value or value set** | Ability to articulate one's own values and belief systems and operate consistently within them |

*Figure 7*: Bloom and Krathwohl's Learning Taxonomy for the Affective Domain

Krathwohl, D. R., Bloom, B. S., & Masia, B. B. (1999). *Taxonomy of educational objectives book 2/Affective domain* (2nd edition). Longman Pub Group.

**Psychosocial characteristics of the gifted.** Program models and specific topics to be considered in creating affective programming were found in many sources (e.g., Eckert & Robins, 2017; Neihart et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2007; Rogers, 2002; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009). Many topics appeared reiteratively. The psychosocial characteristics delineated below represent topics which repeatedly appeared in gifted affective program models. "The psychosocial variables associated with talent development can be taught and systematically strengthened" (Neihart, Pfeiffer & Cross, 2016, 285. Gifted children are often dealing with social and psychological issues associated with their higher-level cognitive abilities and potential that set them apart from their same age peers (Rogers, 2002). Following are some of the components suggested for gifted affective programming.

***Asynchronous development.*** Some specific social emotional topics that have been included in programming for gifted and talented students include asynchronous development (The Columbus Group, 1991), perfectionism (Siegel & Schuler, 2000), relationship building (VanTassel-Baska, 2009), dealing with their sensitivities and intensities (Mendaglio, & Tillier, 2006), and finding positive ways to capitalize on their keen interest in the world around them (VanTassel-Baska, 2009). In addition, according to Cross (2014), "The single greatest threat to the psychological well-being of gifted students is in the mismatch between the school's curriculum and the student's needs" (p. 264).

Roeper (1982) concluded through her years of observation of gifted children that "Gifted children go through the same developmental stages as other [children], but in a different manner and, as a result, develop different types of self-images" (p. 22). Rogers (2002) discussed affective curriculum as part of the recommendations in her book, *Re-Forming Gifted Education*. She recommends the inclusion of affective learning in the elementary grades as, "The older the gifted child becomes, the more complex are the emotional issues to be faced" (Rogers, 2002, p. 309). Important components to an affective curriculum for gifted students would include helping them deal with their differences from typical peers (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002). One additional concern in the social emotional realm for gifted students occurs when, in learning to fit in socially with age peers, there is a pressure to *not* achieve academically (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002). Cross et al. (2013) found that gifted high school students were likely to deny their abilities in social settings that drew attention to them. The learning gap between gifted

students and their same age peers often increases as students get older, with gifted

students sometimes in denial of their greater abilities (Coleman et al., 2015).

*Emotional intelligence.* Initially presented by Mayer and Salovey (1990),

Goleman's (1995) work on EI denoted that academic intelligence alone was not enough

to assure that students adept with cognitive strength alone would be successful without

cultivation in areas relating to emotional success. Proposed characteristics for dealing

with life challenges included the areas of (1) self-esteem, (2) impulse control, (3) self-

motivation, (4) mood management, and (5) people skills (Goleman, 2006; Goleman &

Senge, 2014; Mayer, Perkins, Caruso, & Salovey, 2001). The concept of focusing on

emotional issues with gifted students, according to VanTassel-Baska (2006), should work

towards alleviating anxieties related to their giftedness, help them to create strong circles

of social support, and give them skills for success. Zeidner and Matthews (2017) further

highlight that training in EI would be a valuable investment for "gifted students who are

vulnerable to social-emotional deficits…who are characterized by troubling social,

emotional or interpersonal behaviors" (p. 164), and may be a good basis for designing

interventions for those students.

Hébert (2012), Lovecky (1992), and VanTassel-Baska (2009) each highlight

research which connect aspects of EI with the NAGC Standards (Johnsen, 2012) for the

social and emotional development of gifted students. Self-understanding related to

identity formation has been seen in empirical studies focused on self-actualization

achieved at higher levels by gifted students (Hébert, 2012). In his study of gifted high-

achieving youth, he noted that "a strong belief in self [is] the most significant factor

influencing the success of the young men" (p. 28). Lovecky (1992) also supports the characteristic of EI through her definition of five traits that she found common in gifted children leading to their possible vulnerability: (1) divergent thinking, (2) excitability, (3) sensitivity, (4) perceptiveness, and (5) entelechy or a type of actualization of internal motivation to make a difference. Her conclusion was that, "If gifted children are to achieve their potential, social and emotional aspects of giftedness must be recognized and developed, for functioning in one area requires functioning in others" (Lovecky, 1992, p. 23). Finally, VanTassel-Baska (2009) devotes an entire section in her recommendations for gifted affective curriculum to EI's framework. She gives examples of lessons based on the framework itself, in addition to guidance for creating social and emotional developmental assessment based on the framework's structure: emotional perceptions, using emotions to assist thinking processes, knowing about and understanding emotions, and how to regulate emotions in order "to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (p. 119).

*Feelings of being different.* "Children who are gifted differ from chronological peers in two fundamental ways: ability and motivation" (Coleman et al., 2015, p. 360). Cross (2011) also states that "Giftedness is often experienced as feeling different from other students and, unlike other exceptionalities, can be hidden" (p. 35). Mixed messages, the concept of "normal" development and behaviors, and the mistaken notion of pushy parents being behind all gifted learners, are some of the pervasive ideas that perpetuate the feelings of differentness. Another belief that Cross (2011) attributes to this psychosocial characteristic is related to Dweck's Growth Mindset (2006). Gifted children

often falsely believe that having to work hard at something means that you are *not* gifted in that area. Cross explains that "Working hard is a prerequisite for being excellent or a top performer," (p. 57) an important concept to guide the social and emotional development of gifted learners. Lovecky (1992) also points out several ways in which the gifted feel different from their age peers in that "It is not uncommon for gifted children to find that age peers do not share their interests, play by different rules and appear to engage in pastimes, such as teasing, that many gifted children find puzzling and painful" (p. 18).

Feelings of being different are a potential risk in the social and emotional development of gifted individuals. Webb et al. (2007) discuss these feelings of differentness in several places in their book, *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*. Too often in school and in society, the message is given that conforming is equal to "growing up." In attempting to socialize gifted children, the adults in their world "respond negatively to the gifted child's differences without considering how this might affect the child" (p. 60). This can be another reason that children may choose to hide their giftedness, rather than dealing with negative responses and comments. High sensitivity only acts to amplify this effect. The NAGC Social and Emotional Standards (Johnsen, 2012), Reis and Renzulli (2004), Silverman (2000) and Zeidner and Matthews (2017) each recommend that when creating social emotional competency programming, feelings of being different be included.

*Interpersonal skills.* From the NAGC (2010) skill standards, to the CDE Gifted Education Guidelines (Chelin, 2015), to the early work of Betts and Neihart

(1985) and Webb (1993), interpersonal skills have been shown to be an important

and necessary component in affective programming for gifted learners. CDE lists

interpersonal relationships as an area which may be associated with social

emotional struggles of gifted students (Chelin, 2015). They suggest targeted

affective instruction in this area, based on individual's needs assessments. Some

of the skills that may need to be explicitly taught include awareness of

communication style, making eye-contact with others, and using friendly tones of

voice (Webb et al., 2007). Galbraith and Delisle (2011) use the term social

intelligence quotient (SQ) in giving students a series of questions they can use to

have others assess their interpersonal skills. They have a section with which gifted

learners can boost their SQ. Neihart et al. (2016) conclude their synthesis of

empirical research relating several conclusions about interpersonal

communication and skills. They note that socioemotional challenges, although

"not unique, are more prevalent among the gifted because of their ability or

because of how society and their peers view individuals of high ability" (p. 284).

They also relate that deficits in this area may also be contributing factors to

underachievement. Finally, Lovecky (1992) shares that sometimes-needed

interpersonal communication skills may involve learning the difference between

compassion and empathy in teaching gifted learners how to create interpersonal

space to avoid taking responsibility for others' feelings.

*Intrapersonal skills.* Although these skills may overlap with several other

psychosocial characteristics, such as EI, perfectionism, and underachievement, there are

specific types of intrapersonal skills that are important in and of themselves, and should

be approached in the evaluation of gifted affective programming. Student outcomes laid

out in the NAGC Standards include self-understanding, awareness of individuals'

affective needs, self-awareness, self-efficacy, confidence, motivation, and overall

personal competence (Johnsen, 2012).

Neihart (1999) gives an overview of another aspect of intrapersonal skills in her

definition of self-concept. She regards it as a set of thoughts about oneself, which are

often seen as an essential component of one's personality. She discusses a series of

studies done that conclude there is no difference between the self-concepts of gifted

versus non-gifted children; others that showed gifted children having a more positive

self-concept than nongifted children; and some that found gifted students had lower self-

concepts than their non-gifted counterparts. With self-concept showing changes with

differing developmental levels, she concludes that self-concept alone is not a sole

criterion in determining gifted children's introspective needs (Neihart, 1999).

Aspects of strategies to guide gifted learners towards successful development of

intrapersonal skills are shared in Webb et al.'s (2007) work. This information can be

helpful in working towards countering negative or deficit intrapersonal skills in gifted

students. The suggested six steps for parents and educators to use in encouraging growth

and avoiding underachievement are: "(1) create an environment that promotes achievement and motivation, (2) avoid power struggles, (3) develop a positive relationship, (4) provide stimulation, interest and challenge, (5) establish appropriate goals and sub-goals, and (6) build on gradual success" (p. 71). In addition, they also encourage flexibility, patience and understanding when working with making positive changes in learners' intrapersonal skills.

Other researchers delineating intrapersonal skills' development for gifted children include VanTassel-Baska (2009), Hébert (2012), Dixson and Worrell (2016), and Lovecky (1992). VanTassel-Baska (2009) concludes that guiding gifted children in discerning their values and beliefs at young ages can lead to fewer problems in adolescence. Identity is one aspect of gifted students' intrapersonal selves. Hébert (2012) gives an overview of research illustrating that identity formation and self-actualization are related to internal locus of control. He concludes that leading gifted learners towards knowing and understanding themselves shows the importance of training educators in how to guide this process. Dixson and Worrell (2016) also discuss identity and note the paucity of empirical data related to gifted individuals' identity development. Yet one difference may be that gifted students' identity development may be sped up depending on the amount of acceleration in their academic programming. Finally, Lovecky (1992) includes a discussion about the importance of supporting gifted children in learning how to self-regulate their activity levels and recognizing and dealing with their more intense responses to stress, frustration, and environmental aggravations.

*Overexcitabilities.* Dabrowski theorized that gifted individuals experience the world by having greater or "over" excitabilities in five different forms (Mendaglio & Tillier, 2006; Piechowski, 2014a, 2014b). These five areas are psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginational, and emotional. In having these heightened perceptions, gifted individuals can experience the world in a more magnified way than the typical person (Wiley, 2016). These hypersensitivities can often set them apart from others, creating a different reality encompassing a "wider range of experiences" (O'Connor, 2002, p.55). When teachers and other school support staff have little or no knowledge or understanding of these experiences, gifted students can be misunderstood and be treated in less than constructive and supportive ways (Coleman et al., 2015).

*Perfectionism.* When gifted students hold high standards for themselves, perfectionism can be the result (Neihart et al., 2016). According to Schuler (as cited in Reis & Renzulli, 2004), there can be positive aspects of perfectionism, leading to greater persistence and drive, but there can also be problems with perfectionism that can "result in avoidance, anxiety and failure" (p. 310). According to Adelson and Wilson (2009), perfectionism can be divided into two categories: adaptive or healthy and maladaptive or unhealthy. In their book, *Letting Go of Perfect: Overcoming Perfectionism in Kids*, they delineate five types of perfectionism and give classroom strategies for each. Some of these are for use in SEL program lessons and others can be used in "crisis moments" (p. 5).

***Underachievement.*** Underachievement, according to Reis and McCoach (2002), is widely regarded as one of the most pervasive problems affecting gifted and talented students. It can be identified when there are observable discrepancies between what a student's ability is in relation to what he/she is achieving. Causes can come from the environment such as under challenging, slow-moving classroom experiences, attempts to disguise abilities to fit in, and feelings of isolation or family issues (Reis & McCoach, 2002). There can also be internal factors, such as depression, anxiety, perfectionism, anger, or undiagnosed learning disabilities (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002). A focus on SEL that works on issues of self-regulation, organization, and social skills can have a positive impact on underachievement if deficits in these areas are contributing to the lack of achievement (Neihart et al., 2016). "Underachievement can correspond with a broad range of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental issues, including depression, anxiety, perfectionism, anger, low self-esteem, maladaptive strategies, social immaturity and unrecognized learning deficits peer pressure, family dynamics, low SES, teaching style, and curriculum" (Neihart, 2006, p. 47).

Sylvia Rimm (1997, 2008), a recognized leader in research and interventions for underachievement, outlines specifics of what she terms the Underachievement Syndrome, and offers her Trifocal Model to reverse underachievement for capable children who are not working to their abilities in school. This three-pronged approach is based on the premise that underachievement involves learned behaviors, habits, and attitudes that can be changed through work using a 6-step approach, with teachers, parents, and students

working towards these changes. In the case of disadvantaged students who may not have

the support from parents, surrogates can fill in for their part in this model.

**SEL Programming Models for Gifted Learners**

According to Neihart (2006) in a literature review on social emotional strategies

for working with gifted learners, NAGC's Counseling and Guidance Division found "82

publications representing 35 studies that had been released on topics of giftedness and

guidance" (p. 113) between 1999 and 2006. Research has pinpointed characteristics of

gifted learners (Clark, 1979; Galbraith & Delisle, 2015; Neihart, 2016a; Silverman,

2000b; Weinbrenner & Brulles, 2012) much more readily than studies about how to best

support their social and emotional development. In a thorough search of the literature,

however, many common themes arose for recommendations related to ideas for social

emotional curricula content specifically for gifted learners. Figure 8 offers a diagram in

the form of a pyramid delineating interventions that are designed to meet the increasing

social and emotional needs of gifted students - from the general or universal intervention

to the very specific for increasing support.



Figure 1. A model for promoting children's social-emotional development and preventing challenging behavior.
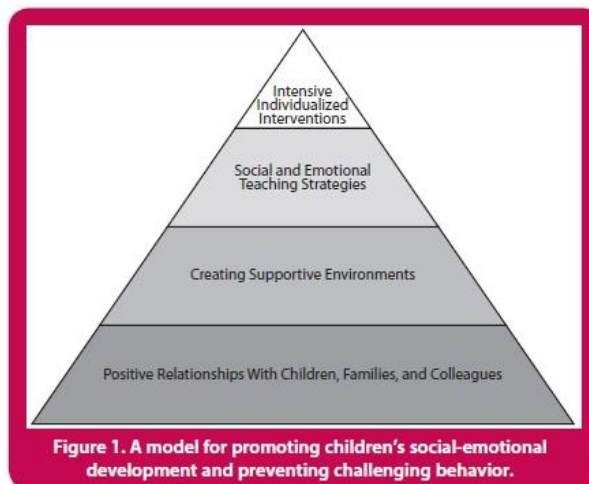
*Figure 8.* A framework for promoting children's social emotional development and preventing challenging behavior teaching pyramid (Corso, 2007).

Another model for gifted SEL programming is found in Eriksson's Objectives of Differentiated Guidance and Counseling for Gifted Students (as cited in Cavilla, 2016), shown in Figure 9. This model shows a differentiated approach for social emotional gifted program design. This model emphasizes a proactive approach towards the affective needs unique to gifted learners. In the left-hand column, a deficit focus is outlined, in which the particular abilities and needs of gifted learners are needing to be "cured" or normalized with those of their "normal" age peers. In the right-hand column, gifted attributes are shown as assets related to the advanced cognitive and social emotional abilities of gifted students. The idea of social and emotional needs having two approaches, one remedial and one developmental, was also discussed by Colangelo (2003). This focus leads to programming in which gifted students are encouraged to reach their full potential. References for Eriksson's model are given to Silverman, Dabrowski and Piechowski (Cavilla, 2016).

| Deficit Model | | Asset Model |
|---|---|---|
| Remedial | | Developmental |
| Conformist | | Differentiated |
| Abnormal behavior | | "Supernormal" behaviors |
| Leveling needs | | Self-actualizing needs |
| Socialization | | Individualization |
| Insensitive | | Hypersensitive |
| Problematic | | Extensive possibilities |
| Maintain status quo | | Transform society |
| Egoistic | | Altruistic |
| Correctional | | Constructive/productive |
| Crisis intervention | | Preventive |

| Emergency<br>Random activity<br>Unresponsive<br><br>Negative Disintegration<br><br>Balance of cognitive and affective needs in line with normal development for age<br><br>*Cure* | **The individual affective**<br><br>**needs of the unique**<br><br>**gifted student** | Proactive<br>Focused alertness<br>Overexcitabilities (OE)<br><br>Positive Disintegration<br><br>Fulfillment of cognitive and affective needs through higher level activities<br><br>*Transcend* |
|---|---|---|

*Figure 9*. Eriksson's Objectives of Differentiated Guidance and Counseling for Gifted

Students (as cited in Cavilla, 2016). Reprinted with permission.

Peterson and Lorimer (2011) pursued a five-year longitudinal study on the use of

an affective curriculum with gifted students. They acknowledged that although there have

been many studies arguing that affective instruction should be included in gifted

education, "Such programs for gifted students, and the process of implementing them

have generally not had research attention" (p. 167). This study focused on small group

discussions taking place at a gifted school with over 260 5th through 8th graders. Criticism

of the study include that there was very little diversity in the sample of students followed.

Peterson and Lorimer's study (2011) was conducted in a private gifted school, which may

not make the findings generalizable for diverse public schools.

Studies of the efficacy in affective programs for gifted learners are further limited

in that many of the published work has been focused on adolescent learners (Cross,

2005). One of the rare studies on elementary aged students was a phenomenological

study undertaken by Eddles-Hirsch, Vialle, Rogers, and McCormick (2010). Their study

participants were elementary aged students at three different private schools in Australia. Analysis of their interview transcripts led them to recommend that building a sense of community via formal social and emotional systems was one way to positively affect gifted students. Another recommendation involved suggesting that teachers both teach and model social skills "and emotional coping strategies to students" (p. 125).

In more recent work on positive psychology, Proyer, Gander, and Tandler (2016) have linked this research to the introduction of strength-based interventions for gifted learners. They see a strength-based focus as having great potential when working with and doing research related to gifted learners. In discussing some of Terman's early work, they remind their readers that one of the three major foci of psychology before WWII was to identify and nurture highly talented individuals in areas such as character strengths. Proyer et al. (2016) suggest a four-step process for interventions that would cultivate both major strengths and even minor ones. This method is: (1) determine what students' strengths are, (2) share common experiences with other talented individuals, including coming up with common language and understand the strengths of classmates, (3) participation in the implementation of specific interventions for character strengths, and (4) evaluation which "might consist of feedback circles that help evaluating the usefulness of these interventions and the strength-based approach in general" (Proyer, et al, 2016, p. 125).

Due to the wide differentiation among gifted learners, some important factors need to be kept in mind when considering what type of SEL programming best meets their needs. Robinson et al. (2007) list seven different things to take into consideration as

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a summary of research studies on meeting both the affective and the educational needs of all gifted students. These considerations are:

1. the degree of giftedness, especially for the highly gifted learners;

2. the racial, cultural, and socioeconomic differences, which may alter the definition of talent;

3. the gender of the student, including gender-expansiveness, because males, females and those with other gender identities encounter and deal with giftedness differently;

4. the talent area, particularly non-academic areas, as those expressions of giftedness may not fit into the school environment;

5. the emotional factors of students' home lives, including catastrophic incidents, such as abuse, parental strife, or loss of family members, and less severe incidents such as location, etc.;

6. other variables including twice exceptionality and emotional illness. (based on Robinson et al., 2007, p. 19)

Finally, the *Journal of Advanced Academics* published the most current overview of SEL programming models for gifted learners earlier this year. Jen (2017) conducted a review of 17 published empirical studies "of direct affective intervention with high-ability students" (p. 225) from the field of gifted education. Her findings give an interesting picture of the research literature related to affective interventions for social and emotional development of gifted learners. They are:

1. In 31 years, only 17 published articles qualified for inclusion in her study, pointing out that a great deal more research is needed based on the amount of advocacy for gifted services.

2. There was very little overlap in research focus, showing that there is not only a broad research interest in this area, but also that some research may need to undergo further examination.

3. Almost no study investigated affective intervention as a whole.

4. Results suggested that both male and female gifted learners not only preferred same gender counseling groups, but also that the group leader(s) be of the same gender.

5. Although a variety of methods were used for gathering data, some of the richest data were gathered using either unplanned or informal observational methods. (Jen, 2017)

Program models and specific topics to be considered in creating affective programming were found in many sources (e.g., Eckert & Robins, 2017; Neihart et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2007; Rogers, 2002; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009). Many topics appeared reiteratively. The psychosocial characteristics delineated below represent topics which were addressed in these program models.

**Chapter Summary**

Reis and Renzulli (2004) recommend some "interventions to promote healthy social emotional development in" (p.123) the gifted population. Their recommendations include supporting academic approaches such as acceleration; clustering for abilities,

interests, and motivation; and the inclusion of social emotional curriculum specifically

that teaches gifted students how to support each other (Reis & Renzulli, 2004). More

specifically, they outline suggestions where teachers model positive behaviors such as

kindness, caring and concern for others, giving positive feedback for appropriate

behaviors, teaching problem solving, and "develop[ing] and implement[ing] affective

curriculum units in areas such as conflict resolution, decision-making and leadership"

(Reis & Renzulli, 2004, p. 124). General SEL curricula also contain many of these

elements (Hoffman, 2009). Many studies have yielded evidence suggesting that SEL is

advantageous for both typical learners and gifted and talented ones.

NAGC's Position Statement on "Nurturing Social and Emotional Development of

Gifted Children" (n.d.) discusses other topics which need to be considered when creating

programming for gifted social emotional development. Differences among gifted

learners, underrepresented populations possible lack of social access to intellectual peers,

and lack of adequate qualitative research on non-asset aspects of giftedness are a few of

the concerns they list. They call for continued research in many areas of exploration of

the development of gifted youth and adults' social and emotional development, including

many of the issues mentioned here.

The study at hand seeks to identify aspects of the SEL movement that would be

beneficial to the social emotional development of gifted and talented learners. According

to CASEL's website (http://casel.org), there have been over 200 different curricula

created that are designed to guide teachers, schools, and districts to universally develop

noncognitive skills for all students. Having analyzed the foundations of the SEL

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movement, its history, its connections to emotional intelligence from Goleman (1995) and Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) who first utilized the term, a picture has been built showcasing SEL. The research reviewed in this section had much to do with self-efficacy, building social competencies, creating classroom settings which support the building of skills necessary for students to learn how to create a "knowledgeable, responsible, healthy, caring, connected and contributing [future]" (Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004, p. 87). The role that legislative and educational policies have had in the recent rise of social emotional learning discussions was also presented. Definitions, models, and descriptions of social emotional programming for gifted students were also discussed. These specific, unique aspects of social emotional development for gifted individuals also included outlining accepted definitions of what it means to be gifted. According to much of the literature, the affective needs of gifted learners are those of typical learners, and yet, often so much more, depending on their educational fit. Perfectionism, underachievement, overexcitabiltities, interpersonal communication, and introspective needs are some of their psychosocial characteristics leading to specific developmental needs. Finally, implications for future research connecting SEL with the specific needs of gifted learners in mind offers ideas for future study. Plucker and Callahan (2014), Cross (2014), the authors of the chapters in Neihart et al. (2016), and many others call for continued research into the area of social and emotional development in gifted students. A paucity of literature was found highlighting the use of the universal SEL curricula for meeting gifted students' unique social and emotional developmental needs.

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## Chapter Three: Methodology

*"Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought."*
Albert Szent-Gyorgyi Hungarian biochemist, 1937 Nobel Prize for Medicine

## Introduction

In the previous chapter the background information, research base, and theoretical frameworks for this study were outlined. Discussion of social emotional learning (SEL) for all learners, curricula created for SEL, an overview of gifted education in general, the specific social and emotional developmental needs of gifted learners, and models for SEL programming for the gifted were all discussed. This chapter illustrates the methods utilized to investigate this qualitative intrinsic case study. A thorough description of the research methodology is provided in this section. The organization of this chapter begins by revisiting the purpose and the research questions, then delves into an explanation of the selection for qualitative case study methodology. Details illustrating the context in which the study occurred include descriptions of the case, the setting, and the sample population. An explanation of the role of the researcher and the data collection methods and instruments utilized to address the research questions and explore this case follow. Finally, the methods for data analysis allowing for the exploration of the use of universal SEL curricula for meeting the needs of gifted learners are presented.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this intrinsic qualitative case study was to explore the efficacy of universal SEL curricula for serving gifted students' social and emotional developmental needs in a large school district in a western state. These specific research questions guided the research and data was collected to address them.

1.  What are the characteristics of gifted learners addressed by universal social and emotional learning curricula?

2.  What are teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the universal social emotional learning curricula employed in their classrooms for their gifted and talented students?

3.  How does utilization of universal social emotional learning curricula address the social and emotional needs of gifted students?

**Research Design**

Research design is "the logical sequence that connects empirical data to a study's initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusions" (Yin, 2009, p. 26). Besides strategies of inquiry, research design involves a philosophical worldview or a set of beliefs that guide action (Creswell, 2009). A qualitative intrinsic case study was designed to investigate the research questions above. The questions which guided this study were both "what" and "how" questions. According to Yin (2014), these questions are descriptive or explanatory questions suggesting that case study is an appropriate research method, rather than quantitative questions that may ask "How many?" The latter, "How many?" questions, would be a better match for a survey and quantitative analysis

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methodology. In addition to the type of questions, case study should also be used, according to Yin (2003), when the situation does not allow for manipulating the behavior of participants and where the researcher is attempting to describe contextual conditions related to the phenomenon being studied.

**Qualitative methodology.** Qualitative research methods are best used when researching complex phenomenon found in instances such as the interactions in classrooms between students and teachers, which involve the social emotional development of gifted learners in this study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Other characteristics of a qualitative study include utilizing an inductive process and creating a richly descriptive product (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In qualitative research, themes and ideas are emergent, as opposed to being known at the beginning of the study. The use of qualitative case study methodology involves undertaking an in-depth study using multiple means of data collection and multiple data sources to explore a single case. The main instrument for data collection and analysis in a qualitative study is the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Best and Kahn (2006) recommend a qualitative research design for studies in which inquiries are going to be used in a naturalistic setting such as in or about a school or classroom. When the goal of research is to provide insight into the phenomenon being studied, such as people, programs, organizations, communities, or cultures, a qualitative case study has been shown to be an effective design (Merriam, 1998).

When creating a classroom ethos in which students are encouraged to take some of the responsibility for their own learning, a practice supported in the general research

foundation of general SEL, social constructivism emerges as a supportive theoretical basis for the learning strategies used (Bandura, 2006). To best delve into the information rich inner workings of just such a classroom, the researcher needs to come to the research with a theory that will "avoid [the chance to get] locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness and pursues new paths of discovery as they emerge" (Bandura, 2006, p. 250). The flexibility of qualitative research allows for just that opportunity.

This study centered on topics that had direct connections to the naturalistic system of a classroom's social constructs. It also addressed a gap in the literature relating SEL and gifted students in mixed ability classrooms. The researcher was unable to find any disaggregated data in the general SEL literature related to its effects on gifted students. Best and Kahn (2006) identify case study as "a way of organizing social data for the purpose of viewing social reality" (p. 259). Intrinsic case study is a research approach that is of particular value when researching topics which are emerging and for which there is a paucity of information in the literature (Streb, 2012). Finding no studies during the literature review portion of this research on the utilization of commercially created SEL to meet the social emotional developmental needs of gifted and talented students, shows that this research study is aimed at a gap in the literature. Qualitative case study provides a way in which complex variables of classroom interactions can be examined and described for readers to be able to find the research personally useful (Merriam, 2009). Commercially created SEL curricula, and SEL as a whole, are both relatively new on the educational research scene. Using universal SEL curricula for meeting gifted

students' social and emotional developmental needs, categorized this study as one related to an emerging topic in current educational research.

**Case study.** According to Creswell (2009), Yin (2009), and (Stake (1995), qualitative case study is an in-depth study of a single case using multiple methods of collecting and analyzing data. The methodology utilized in studying this case, one school district in a western state and the social emotional development of its gifted students, was of an intrinsic nature. An intrinsic case study was used to explore the circumstances surrounding the possible use of universal SEL instruction to meet the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted students. Stake (1995) suggests intrinsic case study as an exploratory methodology when the case has been pre-selected, as in this one, and when the obligation for the study is to understand this particular case. Intrinsic case study helps "us to tease out relationships, to probe issues and to aggregate categorical data, but these ends are subordinate to understanding the case" (Stake, 1995, p. 77).

Case studies are anchored in real-life situations, which result in giving a rich and holistic account of the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2009). The phenomenon studied in this case is a district's journey towards possible future adoption of universal SEL curricula. This journey is told through the description of the case, a school district at the heart of the research, and involves painting a picture of the context and specifics of that journey. Since this study involved collecting and analyzing a variety of data from multiple sources to answer the research questions, a qualitative case study methodology was an appropriate choice (Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 2009, 2013). The flexibility afforded by case study research methodology allowed the researcher to gather data using several

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different methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, "case study research has the potential to contribute to the larger field of education," (Timmons & Cairns, 2009, p. 7) when researchers focus on educational reform's impact to classrooms through thorough description of the context of the study.

Grandy and Grandy quote Stake's explanation of an intrinsic case as on in which the researcher genuinely has an interest in "the case itself rather than in extending theory or generalizing across cases" (Grandy & Grandy, 2009, para. 2). Although this study may also give further informational insight into the use of universal SEL curricula for gifted students, the case research came from a desire to analyze the particulars of curricula in this case, and to "capture the richness and complexity of the case" (Grandy & Grandy, 2009, para. 3). The impetus for this study came from the researcher's interests and experiences with the case itself. "The intrinsic case attempts to generalize from within, rather than from case to case" (Grandy & Grandy, 2009, para. 6). The researcher also hoped to contribute to the larger body of research that is focused on supporting the social and emotional development of gifted learners. A paucity of research has been found relating the use of universal SEL curricula for supporting gifted students.

There is much support for case study in educational research (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 2003, 2012). Case study has also often been used for research in gifted education (Moon, 1991). It is used to "uncover patterns, determine meanings, [and] construct conclusions" (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003). "The purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but the case…the utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience" (Stake, 1995, p. 245). Merriam and Tisdell

(2016) describe a case as one specific unit to be studied. The unit, or bounded system, can be a group, community, school, classroom, or as in this study, a school district (Creswell, 2013). The context for this case study research is the outside world as it relates to this specific school district, SEL curricula, and the needs of The District's gifted learners. Yin (2003) notes that in the diagram seen in Figure 10, the boundaries between the context and the case are often not very sharp. Yin (2013) also denotes that qualitative case study design supports the gathering of a wide variety of types of data. The various types of data collected to provide a rich description of the case/district in question and the samples chosen will be described below. Three schools within The District were the samples or participants used to study the phenomenon at hand. These samples represented embedded subcases used for data collection as shown in Figure 10 (Yin, 2003, 2006). A variety of descriptive data and information was gathered from each of those schools, including interviews and a description of the SEL curricula being employed. Thus, the case for this study was a holistic system of interrelated parts in which research questions of both an intrinsic and descriptive nature were posed (Flick, 2007, Given, 2008).
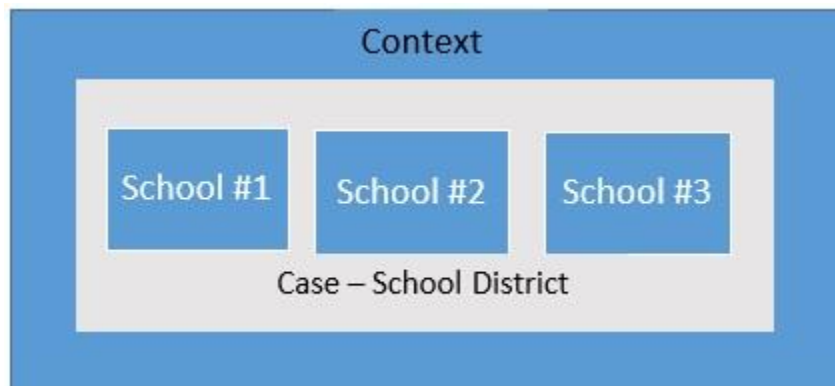
*Figure 10.* Diagram representation of this case study research approach (Yin, 2003).

**Conceptual framework.**  A conceptual framework can serve several purposes in

a qualitative research study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The research questions support the

purpose of this study which is to explore the efficacy of universal SEL curricula for

serving gifted students' social and emotional developmental needs in a large school

district in a western state. As an organizational tool, conceptual frameworks can help to

determine what subjects will be included in a study and which will not. Describing

relationships between working parts of the study is another purpose. The skeleton created

through the framework provides the researcher with chances to organize findings and

gives a stage for analyzing and interpreting findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For purposes

of this study, the researcher formed a framework which shows the connections between

the concepts related to the support of gifted learners' social and emotional development.

Figure 11 shows the relationships between foundational theories related to social and

emotional learning, such as constructivism (Bandura, 2006) and Bandura's (1977, 2001)

social cognitive theory with its ideas of human agency and self-efficacy which support

much of the research on SEL (Dodge et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997;

Elksnin & Elksnin, 2009; Maras et al,. 2014; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014; Zins et al.,

2007). These theories are also the theoretical foundation for the three universal SEL

curricula in this study: Well-Managed Schools (Hensley et al., 2011), Second Step

(Committee for Children, 2014), and Conscious Discipline (Bailey, 2015). The supports

for ideal SEL specific to gifted learners includes the definitions of giftedness ("About

Gifted Education," 2016; Johnsen, 2012; Morelock, 1992), the psychosocial

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characteristics of the gifted (e.g., Eckert & Robins, 2017; Neihart et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2007; Rogers, 2002; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009), and the guiding principles for gifted learners (Neihart, 2017).
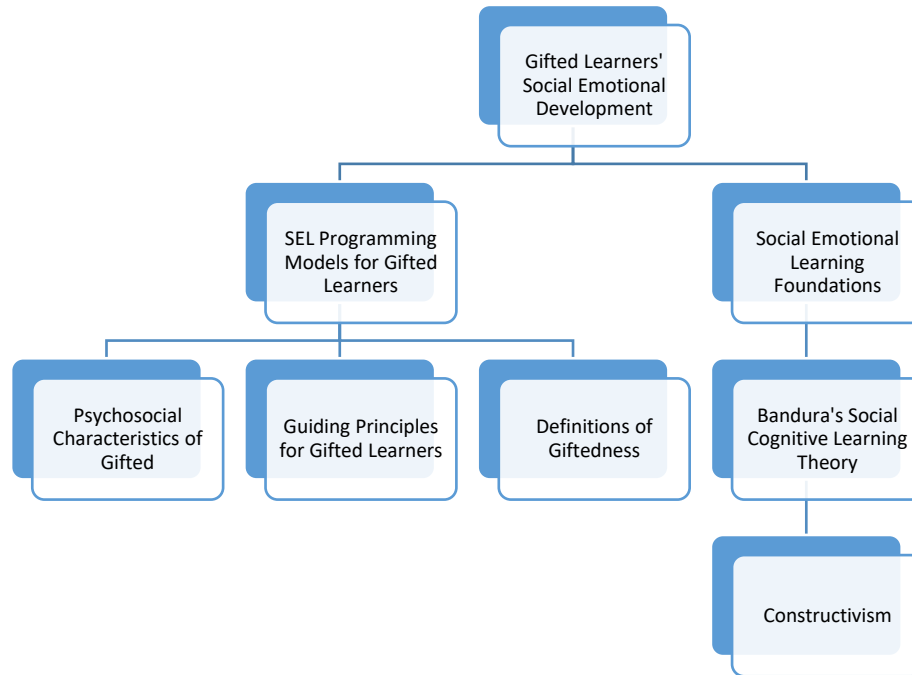


*Figure 11* Conceptual Framework for Exploring Social and Emotional Curricula for Gifted Learners

Specific diagrams illustrate the data collection methods used in approaching answers for each of the research questions. Figure 12 conceptualizes the data collection approach for the first research question:

> *RQ1: What are the characteristics of gifted learners addressed by universal*
>
> *social and emotional learning curricula?*

In this phase of the study, the researcher collected information from the literature of both universal SEL curricula and the developmental social and emotional needs of gifted

learners. The data collected to answer this question was also used in the creation of a rubric for identifying whether commercially created universal SEL curricula addressed the topics backed by researchers in the fields of gifted education and psychology.
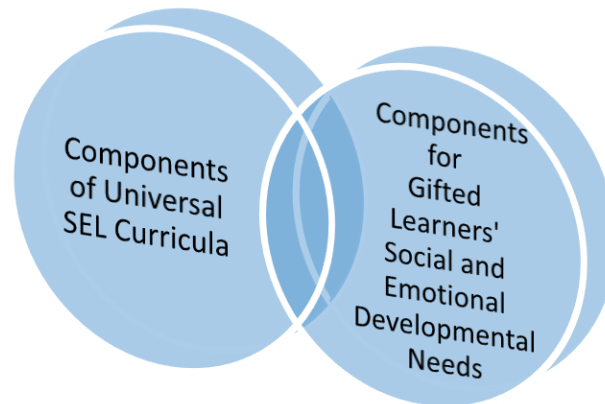


*Figure 12.* Illustrates the Data Collection Method for *RQ1*

The subject for this case study was a school district in a western state, a real world, contemporary setting bounded by geographic and systemic limits (Creswell, 2013). This metropolitan school district was chosen to be examined in its entirety as a social unit (Best & Kahn, 2006). The researcher then purposefully selected individual schools as samples within the case. Each sample was a school in which a different commercially created universal SEL was being utilized. An in-depth exploration of documents was performed for each school, including a description of its demographics and information on the talented and gifted population at the school. A description and analysis of documentation on the curriculum being used at each site, and how each curriculum was selected, occurred next.

Within each school, one classroom teacher was selected to address research question two:

*R2: What are teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the universal social emotional learning curricula employed in their classrooms for their gifted and talented students?*

The purposive samples, or schools, recruited for this study each used a unique curriculum, and the focus ended up being classes at different grade levels due to access and timing. Teachers were each interviewed using the same open-ended, semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix C). Transcripts from these interviews were analyzed using coding and thematic analysis of teacher responses.

The researcher conducted an in-depth look at the literature on the needs and characteristics of gifted learners' social and emotional development. A systematic review was made of the sources discussed in the literature review of Chapter 2. A document review process was used to guide the researcher in gathering sources for use in creating the Rubric (Bretschneider, Cirilli, Jones, Lynch, & Wilson, 2017). The difference between a document review and a literature review is "that a literature review is used to investigate knowledge published from primary and secondary sources. Documentary research refers to many different types of documents and it's used as primary research data" (Bretschneider et al., 2017, p. 3). This review was used to determine broad patterns, generalizations, and/or theories related to the best practices in the development of gifted students' social and emotional development, thus yielding generalizations from experiences to be substantiated (Creswell, 2014). Reading, re-reading, and immersion in the literature and in documents, such as annual reports, policies, periodicals, internet postings, books, social media, curriculum units, dissertations, and pamphlets on the needs

and characteristics of gifted learners' social and emotional development, allowed the researcher to create a rubric based on this process (Creswell, 2014). This rubric, encompassing the characteristics of gifted learners, was used to answer the third research question:

> *R3: How does utilization of universal social emotional learning curricula address the social and emotional needs of gifted students?*

The subject and participants for each sample in this intrinsic case study were determined by first working with the community partner at The District (see Appendix G) to identify schools within The District that were currently systemically using any specific commercially created universal SEL curricula. Three commercially created universal SEL curricula were identified. Three settings were identified, one for each sample. The samples are referred to as Schools A, B, and C. All the teachers in School A were using *Well Managed Schools*, published by Boys Town Press (Hensley et al., 2011). At School B, each grade level was teaching SEL with the *Second Step: Early Learning Though Grade 8 Skills for Social and Academic Success* curriculum (Committee for Children, 2014). The staff at School C was implementing the *Conscious Discipline* (Bailey, 2015) curriculum. Data was gathered through an analysis of each of the curriculum, their scope and sequences, critical design features, and theoretical bases utilizing the Rubric created by the researcher. The Rubric was constructed from document analysis of best practices, research studies, peer reviewed articles, and books by experts in the field.

This case study was also bound by time, in that all information was collected during the spring of 2017 (Creswell, 2003). Recruitment of teachers yielded one teacher

from each school, each of which was using a different universal SEL curriculum, and all three teachers were teaching intermediate elementary grades (Appendix B). Each teacher had been implementing the curriculum for at least the current school year and each also had two or more identified (by The District's identification policy) gifted students in their class. Each teacher's perception of the specific curriculum s/he was using and its efficacy for the gifted students in their classrooms was gathered by way of interview. Professionally created transcripts of these interviews were member checked with the interviewees for accuracy, and then analyzed using coding and thematic analysis focused on teachers' perceptions of this efficacy (see Appendix C Interview Protocol). In a case study, each interviewee can be considered an informant on the topic at hand (Best & Kahn, 2006). The researcher conducted 30-minute, semi-structured interviews with each teacher, and questions included demographic information about the teacher as well as their perceptions of the SEL curriculum.

The conceptual framework, or map, for the design of this study provided a basis from which the results for each research question was organized in a systematic and logical way. Figure 13 illustrates the case and embedded samples explored for this research. This overall organization stimulated this research and gave direction and courses of action for the data collected (Creswell, 2003, 2013).
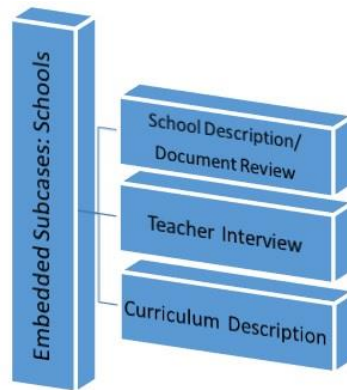
*Figure 13.* Data Collection Model for each school (embedded unit).

This study, overall, was a qualitative intrinsic case study investigating a school district as the case. Within that case, there were three embedded units which are samples of schools in which universal SEL curricula had been adopted and were being systemically employed for at least the second year. The embedded units or samples were described through the collection of documents with which analysis could be done for a thick rich description. This analysis provided information with which the school itself could be depicted. The semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers provided the second set of data to be analyzed. Thirdly, the analytic Rubric created by the researcher was used to evaluate each curriculum being employed by each school. Figure 14 illustrates the organization of data collection for this study.

| The District | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| School A | School B | School C |
| School Description | School Description | School Description |
| Teacher A Interview | Teacher B Interview | Teacher C Interview |
| Well-Managed Schools | Second Step | Conscious Discipline |
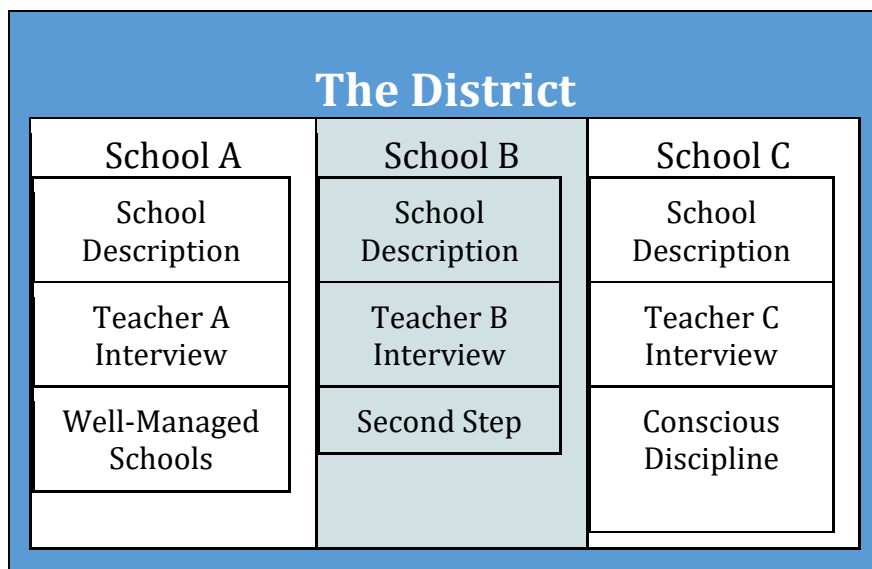
*Figure 14.* The study's Data Collection Organization

**Setting and Participants**

A case study's focus is an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pg. 37). The case or unit of analysis for this research study was a large metropolitan school district in a western state, which was undertaking discovery, discussion, and analysis, of the possible implementation of SEL curricula districtwide. This site or case was selected due to the researcher's employment as a teacher in The District. One outcome for this study's results was to inform decision-makers in The District on the conclusions reached related to the efficacy of SEL curricula and identified gifted and talented students within The District, or case. Another goal was to provide a tool, in the form of a rubric, that would allow these decision-makers to evaluate other universal SEL curriculum for their potential efficacy for meeting gifted learners' affective developmental needs. This district, unlike many others in the same region, did not have systemic social emotional developmental programming in place for

its identified talented and gifted students. According to Creswell (2013), that defines this study as an intrinsic case study. Since the focus for this research was on the case itself, in this study, it was about a specific program within the system that posed a unique situation.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) contend that a case study's focus is a system whose boundaries you can "'fence in' what you are going to study" (p. 38). Boundaries for this case were predetermined in both geographically and social ways, as they were the actual physical boundaries of one school district. The contemporary phenomenon being studied was how universal SEL affects gifted students in a large, public school district. This case was studied because of the focus on implementing a systemic SEL curriculum and the efficacy with a universal SEL curriculum for gifted learners. The selection of this district provided the researcher, an educator in The District, access to all the schools and staff members via the receipt of the university's IRB and research permission from The District (Appendix H).

This setting (the case) was a western state school district that comprised over 50 different school sites. It was chosen because, unlike other districts in the region, there was no systemic program in place to support the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted learners. The researcher was also a teacher in this district, giving her background knowledge of The District itself, as well as the programming for talented and gifted students. About 31,000 students from Pre-K through twelfth grades attended this district. According to the most recent information on its website, the student population of The District was 69% Caucasian, and the largest group of minority students, at 18.7%,

was identified as Hispanic/Latino. Of the total student group, over 14% of them were identified as gifted and talented based on The District's identification policy. This district had begun the process of making choices about SEL curricula and evaluating options for SEL curriculum adoption which included utilizing a variety of SEL curricula, allowing site-based decisions on curricula choice, allowing schools to keep curricula currently being used, or implementing one overall SEL program for the entire district. To complete this study, the researcher needed to design research that would delve into the ways The District, schools within The District, and teachers viewed the possible implementation of SEL curricula as they related to the identified gifted students. Varieties of documents were gathered to analyze these aspects of the case (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2015; Yin, 2012). Examples of documents collected included mission statements, demographic data, department of education information, curriculum documents, district, and school websites. A characteristic of qualitative methodology is that it yields rich, thick description that multiple sources of data can provide (Creswell, 2013).

The impetus for this research began during an initial meeting with the leadership of The District. The researcher, as a long-time employee, was looking for a topic to research that would enhance the gifted programming in the district in which she worked. From the notes of that meeting and discussions with the researcher's advisor, the topic of SEL was chosen for this study. Research questions emerged from the researcher's experiences with the limited social emotional programming in The District's schools and was enhanced by the importance of this topic in light of the state's required ALP guidelines.

This study's research design called for a purposeful criterion-based sampling strategy in choosing the curricula and the interview participants. Creswell (2013) recommends this type of sampling as the most helpful in ensuring the accuracy with which the researcher understands the problem. He also explains that purposeful sampling will give the best information with which the research questions can be answered (Creswell, 2013). Ritchie and Lewis (2013) explain that criterion-based sampling is also called purposive sampling. To provide a selection of samples in which there is a high level of information available, it was important to utilize purposeful criterion-based sampling (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Purposive sampling is also used to identify and select individuals or groups of individuals who have experience with and are knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). "The logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases, with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 65).

Non-probability purposeful criterion-based selection was utilized to choose the three schools as samples for this research. The phenomenon being studied was the efficacy of commercially created universal SEL curricula for meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. These gifted learners, for most or all their day, spend their instructional time included in regular education classrooms.

Three different schools within The District were chosen using purposeful sampling. Each school chosen as an embedded subcase was an elementary school that had already systemically implemented a commercially produced, school-wide universal

SEL curriculum (Yin, 2012). The community partner shared information regarding which schools had formally and programmatically used SEL curriculum. From this information, the researcher was able to determine which schools were using commercially created curricula versus those that had designed their own; those using another type of program not necessarily intended as SEL curriculum; ones that were not consistently using a school-wide program; or ones not overtly addressing SEL instruction.

To develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being studied in each sample - the social emotional development of gifted learners in mixed ability classes - Yin (2009) suggests that the sample of participants be small. A purposeful sampling of three schools, three teachers, and three curricula ($n = 3$) was selected since the potential effects of the universal SEL curricula for gifted learners were unknown. Intrinsic case study is an intuitive approach for use in case study, and is also characterized by being flexible, both of which may be necessary when studying "social phenomena in their original context" (Streb, 2012, p. 374). As this was an intrinsic case study, the limited number of samples chosen allowed the researcher to explore each school and teacher's approach to using the chosen curricula for their gifted students in-depth. According to Yin (2009), when analyzing small samples of participants, in-depth case study is an appropriate choice. Since there are many universal SEL curricula on the market, and few schools in The District were utilizing one specific curriculum school-wide, it was important to keep the sample of teachers and curricula studied small to allow in-depth analysis (Yin, 2009). "There were enough commonalities that some conclusions were

warranted for [this] district. With a small sample size, the case study approach provided a logical means to complete in-depth research" (Timmons & Cairns, 2012, p. 3).

These three samples, or embedded subcases, were a collection of units from the larger population. All the schools in The District used SEL curricula, yet were representative, smaller units rather than the whole case (Yin, 2012). Emails with the text of the Teacher Informed Consent form embedded and attached were personally sent to each $2^{nd}$-$5^{th}$ grade teacher at each school (Appendix B & Appendix I). This recruitment procedure sought teachers who satisfied the following three criteria: (1) the teachers must have used a specific commercially created SEL curriculum or program with his/her students, (2) they must have used this curriculum for at least one full school year, and (3) they must have had two or more identified gifted and talented students included in their classes. From a pool of potential interview subjects, teachers from each school were invited to participate in voluntary recorded interviews specific to their usage of SEL curriculum with their students. As this district doesn't conduct universal gifted education screening assessments until the end of $2^{nd}$ grade, only teachers in $2^{nd}$ through $5^{th}$ grades were invited to volunteer, as they were more likely to have identified talented and gifted students in their classes.

A random selection process was planned to choose one teacher from each school. No one replied to the initial emails, so two weeks later, a second email was sent individually to the same cohort of teachers. This time, three teachers responded to the recruitment email and volunteered to participate in the study. There was one teacher from each school. A fourth also expressed an interest but the interviews had already been

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scheduled. This meant that the planned random choice of teachers from each school would not be necessary. A formal consent form was created and shared with the volunteer teachers, informing the educators that they could stop participating at any time without consequence (see Appendix A). This form also shared the fact that there would be no compensation provided. Confidentiality was assured in the text of the consent form via the use of pseudonyms. Any quotes that would identify the school or the teacher would not be used in any aspect of reporting the study. "Maintaining the anonymity of the subjects involved in case study research is of the utmost importance" (Timmons & Cairns, 2009, p. 5).

The next step in the engagement of the three participants was to schedule the interviews' places and times, and to ensure that the teachers read and understood the Teacher Consent Form (Appendix A). The interviews took place in the classrooms of two participants and in the public library nearest the third. Each interview, about 30 minutes in length, was recorded using a secure password protected iPhone app and transcribed professionally by an online company. This company is reputable and certifies that privacy and security are ensured using a high-level encryption program. The documents generated through these interviews were kept on a password-protected computer and will be destroyed within two years of the study's completion. More information will be found below discussing the precautions taken to ensure the confidentiality of these participants.

Two school district administrators with involvement in decisions about possible adoption of one or more commercially created universal SEL curricula were also interviewed. The data collected from their interviews helped to paint a more vibrant

picture of the entire case. Similar procedures were implemented when undertaking the

teacher interviews. These interviews included email, phone call, and in person requests

for information. Each administrator also signed a consent form (Appendix E); however, a

different interview protocol from the teachers was used. One interview took place via

phone, the other in person, and both were recorded and used a similar professional

transcription company. Similar confidentiality steps were taken with these interview

transcripts, although the administrators' prominent roles in The District made their

identities more difficult to protect. Table 1 shows the steps and timeline for the process of

this case study.

| Research Process Steps | Dates |
| --- | --- |
| Meeting with District Leadership Members | January 2016 |
| Initial Research Proposal | June 2016 |
| Community Partnership | Sept. 2016 |
| IRB Approval | January 2017 |
| District Research Approval | March 2017 |
| Teacher Recruitment and Interviews | April 2017 |
| Research Proposal Reworking Mtg. | June 8, 2017 |
| IRB Amendment Approval | June 2017 |
| Administrative Interviews | July & Aug. 2017 |
| Expert Rubric Review Requests | July & Aug. 2017 |

*Table 1* Research Process Steps

**Role of Researcher**

In a qualitative case study, Merriam (1998) describes the researcher as "the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (p. 16). It is important for the researcher to be responsive to the context being studied, including nonverbal aspects. The researcher also needs to be flexible and adaptive based on circumstances of the study. Additionally, it is important for the researcher to process data quickly to clarify and summarize the information as the study is taking place (Merriam, 1998). Case study allows the researcher to yield richly descriptive end products that require an inductive research strategy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In terms of the interview aspect of this research, Merriam (1998) continues that it is important for the researcher to approach the interviews holistically and to take field notes while recording the conversation for the final data collection phase. "Drawing from the philosophies of constructivism ... qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 1998, p. 15). The interviews served to enhance that aspect of exploring each SEL curriculum.

According to Eisner (1991), research is strengthened when the researcher has a strong aptitude for the research topic and knows the participants. The researcher for this study has an extensive background in SEL and in the social emotional development of gifted learners. Endorsement by the state as a Gifted Specialist Pre-K-12, specific graduate course work related to the nature and needs of gifted individuals, and attendance and participation in many gifted state and national level conferences all added to this

aptitude. The participants in this study, three elementary teachers and two district level officials, were employed in the same school district as the researcher. Of the teachers, only one had previously known the researcher. The other two had connections with other district teachers known by the researcher.

In all types of qualitative research, "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). This aspect of qualitative study has its advantages and its disadvantages. One characteristic that can be both a plus and a minus is that of the researcher utilizing instruments, such as interviews and in this case the evaluation Rubric, that are created by the researchers themselves (Creswell, 2013). Any biases brought to the study by the researcher must be identified and monitored to make transparent ways in which they could skew the results and conclusions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although subjectivity is not the purpose of qualitative studies, it can still have an impact on studies' outcomes.

**Data Collection**

This study used two major methods of data collection. Document review was used to answer both the first and last of the three research questions.  In their study, Bretschneider et al. (2016) suggest that in utilizing document review as part of qualitative research, the use of a document checklist is an appropriate system for gathering data. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data related to research question two. Kvale and Brinkman's (2009) seven steps for interviews were followed as the protocol for the interview portion of this research. Creswell (2013) and Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) interview procedures guided the plan and practice of the interview portion of the

data collection for this study. Qualitative case study depends on the triangulation of both methods and data for validating and corroborating research results (Bowen, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2012).

The first step in data collection involved a deeper look into research studies, peer-reviewed journal articles and books which would outline the psychosocial variables of gifted learners' social and emotional development. The literature review served as the basis for this more in-depth look for common themes, experts, theories, and document analysis. This evaluative instrument used the "essential affective constructs that are most critical to gifted students' overall growth," (Cavilla, 2016, p. 29) as initially found in the literature. According to Bretschneider et al. (2016), document review can be used as a data collection method in answering a research question, such as RQ1: "*What are the characteristics of gifted learners addressed by universal social and emotional learning curricula?*" A vast number of studies, articles, books, reports, dissertations, curriculum units, and lesson plans were reviewed in order to answer this question. Resources such as databases, peer-reviewed journals, position papers from professional organizations, articles found on various well-respected websites and social media sites can provide many resources when the researcher develops quality search terms.

The second form of data collection was a review of documents found in the material culture of the case (school district) and the samples, giving context to the deep description of the supports in place for supporting gifted students' social and emotional needs. The third form of data collection involved analyzing the recorded interviews of district leadership and of a teacher from each sample school, to find themes and

categories to answer the research questions. This variety of data collection gave multiple points of view in terms of the phenomenon, SEL for gifted learners, being studied.

Qualitative research is characterized by its flexibility for "capturing the different elements that contribute to peculiarities of the phenomenon under investigation" (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2012). Although Yin (2012) lists six possible common sources of data for triangulation, he also points out that triangulation can also be done if there are "two or more independent sources all point[ing] to the same set of events or facts" (p. 115). Triangulation or converging lines of evidence were analyzed through this study's data collection methods. Yin (2003) states that to use case study research design, "the events or facts of the case have been supported by more than a single line of evidence" (p. 99). In earlier work, Yin (1994) also pointed out that "case studies need not always include direct, detailed observations as a source of evidence" (p. 14). The nature of this study prevented the researcher from being able to include observation as one of its data points.

The forms of data to be used in triangulating the themes found in this study came from document review, interviews of both teachers and district administrators, and an evaluation of three different universal SEL curricula. For analysis, specific aspects of the curricula were analyzed by the utilization of the Social Emotional Learning for Exceptional Children's Thinking and Emotional Development (SELECTED) Rubric™

(Turner, 2017) found in Appendix K. Triangulation of data included all three of these sets of data.

**Evaluation Rubric draft development.**  The first research question asked, "What are the characteristics of gifted learners' social emotional developmental needs represented in the universal SEL curriculum?" After a thorough literature review was completed, several different strategies were used to comprehensively collect, read, and catalog both primary and secondary sources related to the social and emotional development of gifted learners. Document review was undertaken after the literature review. Many different types of documents were collected and analyzed, using specific authors and researchers related to the social and emotional development and needs of gifted learners. Many of the resources analyzed are represented in the Rubric Resources, part of Appendix K.

This process began by researching studies, articles, and books related to the creation of SEL for gifted learners. Another search term that proved fruitful was "affective programming for gifted learners." Major resources that focused on this topic were Eckert and Robins (2017), Neihart et al. (2016), Robinson et al. (2007), Rogers (2002), and VanTassel-Baska et al. (2009); particularly VanTassel-Baska's (2009) "Affective Curriculum and Instruction for Gifted Learners."  Listing each of the topics these researchers suggested for inclusion in an affective intervention for gifted students was the first point of reference for the development of the rubric topics.

The initial topic list of search terms was recorded in a data table as seen below in

Figure 15. The sources cited in each of the documents above offered a comprehensive

starting point. Other sources gathered by the researcher added a broader scope to the

search.  One objective of this research study was to comb through the knowledge base of

the social and emotional developmental needs, social emotional curriculum, and other

expert research related to this topic. To determine whether the universal curricula would

meet the needs of gifted students, the researcher utilized these vast resources to create a

rubric for evaluating universal curricula in relation to these characteristics. Qualitative

content analysis, as recommended by Schreier (2013), gave the researcher a type of

coding frame from which to gather material around substantive themes. One difficulty

with this process, however, was in trying to create coding frames with content that was, at

times, mutually exclusive. In looking at the extant information on the affective needs of

gifted learners, overlapping content and topics occurred quite often. This is evidenced by

the categories and sub-categories in the Rubric; for example, where "Feelings of Being

Different" is a separate category from "Asynchronous Development" when those two

topics may often be interrelated. The SELECTED Rubric™ (Appendix K) which

Topic: _____

| | Source #1 | Source #2 | Source #3 | Source #4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Main Idea A | | | | |
| Main Idea B | | | | |

*Figure 15.* Synthesis matrix template for collecting references (Ingram, Hussey, Itgani & Hemmelgarn, 2006).

summarized these codes, was then created for use in analyzing the three curricula in this study. It is also intended that this format will be used in determining the merits of other universal curricula's merits for meeting the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted learners.

*Choosing a rubric format.* Originally used in medicine to evaluate and label medicines and diseases, rubrics made the leap to educational usage with the implementation of standardized assessments in the late 1970s (Dirlam & Byrne, 1978). Rubrics provide a tool for comparing items, products, and responses but mostly performances (Brookhart, 2013). Brookhart (2013) also explains that their design is not intended to include every possible aspect of the performance at hand but is meant to be "indicators of learning outcomes" (para. 4). Rubrics have become ubiquitous in education as a tool for assessing student work (Brookhart, 2013; Cooper & Gargan, 2009; Curtis, 2016). Jonsson and Svingby (2007), after conducting a meta-analysis of 75 studies on the effectiveness of rubrics, found little empirical evidence to support their use. However, they did determine that "even if research articles have been presented on the topic for a decade, the research may still be described as rudimentary" (p. 139). However, according to Mullen, Nixon, Phifer, Taggart, and Wood (2004), rubrics have also been successfully created to assess an educational program's strengths and weaknesses.

Rubrics can provide a system with which to "define explicit criteria and obtain accurate information about the success of a program" (Mullen et al., 2004, p. 23). For the

purposes of evaluating commercially created universal SEL, the researcher adapted the matrix configuration of educational rubrics (Gonzalez, 2014). The purpose of the creation of this instrument was to gather data about the efficacy of general SEL curricula for developing the specific social and emotional needs of gifted learners. This instrument could be used to give teachers, principals, and district leaders a means to discuss and compare various curricula through the lens of best practices for gifted learners (Mullen et al., 2004).

     ***Content development process.*** The process used for developing the criteria for the Rubric was document analysis (Bretschneider et al, 2016). The creation of the Rubric, designed for evaluating universal curricula for constructs targeting the social and emotional needs of gifted students, began with the literature review. The first benchmarks for topics to include came from published material related to the creation of affective instruction for gifted learners. Some of the more prominent experts in this field were studied first, following up with references from their work. From there, three additional resources were also used in the creation of baseline criteria for the categories and sub-categories which were used to develop the Rubric. They were the NAGC's position statement on "Nurturing Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children" (NAGC, 2009b), the state's Department of Education's "Social-Emotional and Career Guidance for Gifted Students" guidelines outlining the suggested topics for gifted and talented social emotional programming (Chelin, 2012), and the more recent 2010 Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards (Johnsen, 2012).

Baseline topics' use in the synthesis matrix template (Figure 15, pg. 139) was the

first step in the content development process (Ingram et al., 2006). This process is

illustrated in Figure 16. First, the literature on the creation of SEL curricula specifically

for gifted learners started the snowball process (Jalai & Wohlin, 2012; Ridley, 2012).

Next, NAGC's (2009) position statement was used in identifying characteristics

associated with giftedness found in clinical and research literature. These included: (1)

sensitivity, (2) perceptiveness, (3) overexcitabilities, (4) divergent thinking, (5)

precocious talent development, and (6) advanced moral development. Many of these had

already been found in the initial search. Specific topics identified from the western state's

Gifted Education Guidelines were combined with topics found in Figure 16 and

Appendix L, the NAGC standards related to the social and emotional development of

gifted learners (Johnsen, 2012).

According to this western state's Department of Education's guidelines for

"Social-Emotional Teaching Strategies," subjects to include in SEL for gifted learners

are: (1) knowing myself and understanding others, (2) encouraging risk-taking, (3)

managing mood, (4) coping with anxiety and stress, (5) advocating for yourself, and (6)

recognizing when interventions are needed beyond the classroom (Chelin, 2012). Topics

occurring in the NAGC standards (Johnsen, 2012) were also gathered from VanTassel-

Baska's (2009) identification of "Standards for Preparation of Gifted Education Teachers

Focusing on Social-Emotional Needs of Students" (Appendix M), and the more recent

2010 "Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards" applicable for supporting the

social and emotional development (Figure 16) of gifted learners (Johnsen, 2012). Topics

found in Standards 1 and 4 include: (1) self-understanding, (2) awareness of needs, (3)

affective growth, (4) talent development, (5) self-awareness, (6) self-advocacy, (7) risk-

taking, (8) social competence related to peers, and (9) positive coping skills.

| |
|---|
| **Standard 1:** Learning and Development Description: Educators, recognizing the learning and developmental differences of students with gifts and talents, promote ongoing self-understanding, awareness of their needs, and cognitive and affective growth of these students in school, home, and community settings to ensure specific student outcomes. |
| *1.1 Self-Understanding.*<br>Students with gifts and talents demonstrate self-knowledge with respect to their interests, strengths, identities, and needs in socio-emotional development and in intellectual, academic, creative, leadership, and artistic domains. |
| *1.2. Self-Understanding.*<br>Students with gifts and talents possess a developmentally appropriate understanding of how they learn and grow; they recognize the influences of their beliefs, traditions, and values on their learning and behavior. |
| *1.4. Awareness of Needs.*<br>Students with gifts and talents access resources from the community to support cognitive and affective needs, including social interactions with others having similar interests and abilities or experiences, including same-age peers and mentors or experts. |
| *1.6. Cognitive and Affective Growth.*<br>Students with gifts and talents benefit from meaningful and challenging learning activities address |
| *1.8. Cognitive and Affective Growth.*<br>Students with gifts and talents identify future career goals that match their talents and abilities and resources needed to meet those goals (e.g., higher education opportunities, mentors, financial support). |
| **Standard 4:** Effective educators of students with gifts and talents create safe learning environments that foster emotional well-being, positive social interaction, leadership for social change, and cultural understanding for success in a diverse society. Knowledge of the impact of giftedness and diversity on social-emotional development enables educators of students with gifts and talents to design environments that encourage independence, motivation, and self-efficacy of individuals from all backgrounds. (Abridged) |
| *4.1. Personal Competence.*<br>Students with gifts and talents demonstrate growth in personal competence and dispositions for exceptional academic and creative productivity. These include self-awareness, self-advocacy, self-efficacy, confidence, motivation, resilience, independence, curiosity, and risk taking. |
| *4.2. Social Competence*. Students with gifts and talents develop social competence manifested in positive peer relationships and social interactions. |
| *4.3. Leadership.* |

| Students with gifts and talents demonstrate personal and social responsibility and leadership skills. |
| --- |

*Figure 16*. 2010 PK-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards Related to the Social and

Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners (Johnsen, 2012).

Using these initial topics, the researcher was able to focus specific searches in

catalogues, databases, and peer-reviewed journals, looking for additional support for the

baseline topics. Through reading about the social emotional developmental needs of

gifted learners, overlapping topics and patterns had already emerged. Familiar authors,

including those from the first search related to the creation of affective programming,

began to appear in the citations and bibliographies of research studies, books, and book

reviews using the university's library search engines. Continuing with the snowballing

technique, some topics emerged repeatedly (Jalai & Wohlin, 2012; Ridley, 2012).

Electronic sources and databases, such as EbscoHost, Wiley Interscience, JSTOR,

CREDO Reference, ERIC, SAGE Research Library, Google Scholar, Digital Commons,

and ProQuest also allowed for tracking forward citations to see the number of times and

locations the various sources had been cited.

While reading, rereading extensively, and searching primary and secondary

sources throughout the scientific literature related to these characteristics, information

gathered was organized using a synthesis matrix (Ingram, Hussey, Itgani, &

Hemmelgarn, 2006). Figure 14 on page 138 illustrates the template used to keep track of

sources with references to the major topics and criteria found in the literature. There were

several experts in the field of gifted social and emotional needs whose work added to the

baseline topics (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Eide & Eide, 2006; Galbraith & Delisle,

2011; Gatto-Walden, 2016; Hébert, 2012; Neihart et al., 2016; Purcell & Eckert, 2006, 2017; VanTassel-Baska, 2011; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009). From there, an informal systematic document review was made of the sources discussed in the literature review of Chapter 2. From the baseline categories, research continued based on the researcher's personal knowledge, existing resources, texts from graduate course work, knowledge of leaders in the field of social emotional development in gifted learners, personal contacts, and academic networks.

At the outset of this process, the baseline topics were entered into the left-hand column of the synthesis matrix (Figure 15, page 139). As additional resources were read, notes were made in the appropriate columns, with abbreviated bibliographic references next to the source number and title. Results of the document review process were used to determine broad patterns, generalizations, and/or theories related to the best practices in the development of gifted students' social and emotional development; thus yielding generalizations from experiences to be substantiated (Creswell, 2014).

The Rubric (Appendix K) evolved from this process. It became a matrix in which the characteristics and developmental needs of gifted students' SEL became the criteria with which to evaluate universal SEL curricula. The categories occupy the "y" axis or left-most column of the matrix. Sub-categories further delineate related aspects of these topics that often appeared in the literature. Occupying the "x" axis of the matrix is a list of the scaled levels of the appearance of the criteria (Allen & Tanner, 2006). The extensive literature review and subsequent document review yielded topics, themes, and eventual component categories related to best practices regarding the development of

social emotional development of gifted learners. These final criteria or curriculum components are indicators of topics that, according to the literature and best practices of gifted education, would support the social and emotional development of gifted learners (Brookhart, 2012).

This Rubric contains specific aspects of each component and its sub-components to identify whether the curriculum has extensive coverage of the topic, covers it well, or had little or no mention of it. Using this device to evaluate curricula will give its users an idea of whether the curricula may be efficacious for gifted students. The Rubric was used as a checklist for exploring universal SEL curricula. A variety of citations were listed in the rubric reference section, giving some specific pieces of literature in which the support for the topics' inclusion were found. These topics became the Category column on the final rubric. Using this device will allow future curriculum raters the chance to get a well-rounded determination on which supports are available for gifted learners and which ones are not. Once a curriculum is evaluated, the raters can also easily determine in which areas of gifted social emotional needs it has strengths and which areas are lacking. This Rubric, an analytical rubric rather than a holistic one, offers the advantage of treating each criteria or component separately, rather than giving one overall score as in a holistic rubric (Brookhart, 2012). Thus, when using the Rubric for comparisons between universal curricula, decision-makers will be given more specific information about the strengths and weaknesses of each. This allowed for assessment and evaluation of each curriculum (Appendix J).

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***Expert review of instrument – Rubric.*** Expert review and feedback was sought via email for opinions and suggestions on the initial draft of the Curriculum Evaluation Tool (Appendix K). The researcher asked several national-level gifted education and psychology experts in both the field of gifted education in general, and the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted children, to comment on the rubric draft. "An expert is a person who has background in the subject area and is recognized by his or her peers or those conducting the study as qualified to answer questions" (Meyer & Booker, 2001, p. 429). Six professionals in the gifted education field were chosen through a specific criterion as possible experts. Each had a Doctorate in either education or psychology, had taught at the college level, and was well known in the gifted community (i.e. SENG, NAGC) as researchers, published authors, contributors to peer-reviewed journals, and speakers at national and international conferences on the gifted and talented. Of the three who were able to provide feedback and comments, two were practicing psychologists specializing in working with the gifted, and the third was teaching at a university and had conducted research, written, and presented about the social emotional development of the gifted. Each had "context-dependent knowledge and experience" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.4) in the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted learners. Comments and changes made according to this expert review are found in the results chapter.

**District descriptive data.** Additional documents were collected and analyzed to provide a rich description of The District in this case study. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), document review involves collecting data from their natural settings.

Bretschneider et al. (2016) suggest that documents can be internal or external to an organization, such as a school or school district. Internal sources, such as mission statements, demographic and program information, and district goals were found on school and district websites. External sources came from other online sources including the CDE website's Schoolview section (https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview). Records, documents, and artifacts such as these allowed insight into the "material culture" of the case (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). This type of content analysis "allows inferences to be made which can then be corroborated using other methods of data collection" (Stemler, 2001, p. 1).

One of the areas of data collection pertained to describing The District, or case, itself. Examples of these documents were The District's mission and vision statements, and values (Appendix N); published demographics from school and district sites, in addition to the CDE site; and the report by CASEL on The District's readiness for the implementation of SEL programming (Appendix O). The National Center for Education Statistics was another source for information on The District (https://nces.ed.gov). Mission statements have been used as useful sources of empirical research data when studying schools, to determine their purpose and values (Stemler, Bebell, & Sonnabend, 2011). According to Stemler and Bebell (1999), "Mission statements are a unique as well as a systematic statement reflecting the school's ideals and operations. Furthermore, mission statements present an easily and publicly available window into the stated purpose of school" (p. 34). These document analyses gave the opportunity to facilitate the "discovery of cultural nuances" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The schools were described

with the help of the documents that were analyzed. For each school, data was collected; most of data came from each school and The District's websites. To describe the samples examined in this research, the settings are described based on their mission statements, demographics, and other applicable information gathered, and presented while still respecting the confidentiality of the respondents (Kaiser, 2009).

       **Interviews.** For each school, once the document review was utilized to describe the school setting, teacher interview transcripts were analyzed using a coding system. Overviews, curriculum guides, and various previous studies on the curriculum were analyzed and evaluated with the Rubric created by the researcher. The design for the data collection from each sample ($n = 3$), or school, is illustrated in Figure 13.
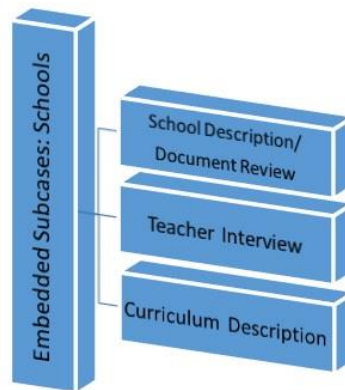


*Figure 13.* Data Collection Model for each school (embedded unit).

       According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research depends on reaching a holistic understanding of a phenomenon through the collection of data from participants and their views of that phenomenon - most often though transcripts of verbal information gathered via interview. A semi-structured interview is "defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the

meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 2007). Creswell (2013) suggests that the interview process be embedded in the larger sequence of a qualitative research study. According to Merriam (1998), interviewing person-to-person is the most common form of data collection for qualitative research. The purpose of this study was to analyze the three samples, or embedded subcases, in this case to describe how each of three SEL curricula relate to the social and emotional development of gifted learners (Yin, 2012). Face-to-face interviews transpired with three classroom teachers and two district administrators as part of the data collected for this study. Brief follow-up interviews also took place as needed, based on the analysis of the primary interviews. Member checking then took place to ensure internal validity, or credibility, from the interviewees (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Once three schools systemically using universal SEL curricula were identified, other documents found on their websites were also analyzed. This allowed for each story to be told related to the phenomenon in question. Interviews were scheduled and conducted with audio recordings and later transcribed professionally, analyzed, and summarized.

*Teacher interviews.* As there were few teachers utilizing commercially produced universal SEL in the district in question, the pool for interviewees was rather narrow in scope. Once the schools, and thus the SEL curricula, had been identified, another form of data collection took place. Interviews were held with each teacher pertaining to the curriculum they were currently using with their students. This included the gifted learners who were part of these general education classrooms. Teacher recruitment emails were sent out to the selected schools (Appendix B). The desire to gain an in-depth look at a

teacher using a curriculum in its real-world context added another dimension to this intrinsic case's analysis (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2012). Teachers were invited to participate in taped interviews specific to their usage of SEL curriculum with their gifted students.

Creswell (2013) recommends that interviews used for qualitative studies include few open-ended questions. Although the prevalence of interviews abounds in popular culture today, a research interview is not the same as our everyday conversations. It "is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 107). The dialogue in a research interview should focus on questions related to the research study. Since it is not possible to observe people's inner thinking, feelings, and intentions, the interview offers a systematic approach to gathering this information to include in the descriptive case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Patton (2015) explained that in interviewing, the major purpose is to give the interviewer insight into the interviewees' point of view.

The interviews used for this portion of the study were of an open-ended conversational format (Creswell, 2014). There were a few specific questions based on support from the literature (Appendix C & Appendix D); however, an interview guide was also created in case organic topics were not originated. The flexibility of this type of interview fits with the nature of the topic, finding out about the teachers' perspectives on SEL and their connections to the identified gifted and talented students in their classes (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interviewer's bias was minimized by taking a neutral stance on the topics to generate quality data and valid findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These semi-structured interviews occurred face-to-face with one

teacher representing each school and each specific curriculum being analyzed. The researcher was the instrument in the interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews give the researcher the opportunity to carry on a conversation with a person inside of the case being studied and to get the perspective of someone who is on the front line of the case and able to give thoughts, feelings, and intentions which add to the evaluation of the case (Creswell, 2003, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews also allowed the questions to be used flexibly, yet still garnered answers that gave specific enough data to develop a picture of what took place inside the samples for this case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once teachers had been selected, teacher consent forms were explained, read, and signed (Appendix A). The teacher interviews were recorded using an iPhone app and transcribed professionally for analysis. These open-ended interviews provided an opportunity to get the teachers' points of view on how the use of universal SEL has affected the gifted students in their classrooms (Creswell, 2013, 2014). Questions included collecting background information on the teachers:

1. Tell me about your background.

2. Tell me about your teaching experience.

3. What experiences have you had with social emotional learning curricula?

4. Describe the curriculum you are using this year.

As part of the semi-structured interview process, these background questions were followed up with semi-structured guiding questions - with probing and follow-up questions - specifically related to the teachers' perspectives of the curriculum in use in their schools, (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016):

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1. Please tell me about what you consider the overall strengths of the curriculum you are using?

2. What changes or suggestions would you recommend making to the curriculum you are using more efficacious overall?

3. In what ways do you think it provides challenges for your gifted students?

4. How is it effective with your gifted students?

5. What would you change about this curriculum to make it more supportive of your gifted students' social and emotional development?

6. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your gifted students OR the curriculum?

The goal of these interviews was to gather important insights from these teachers concerning their sample within the case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The rationale for the choice of questions can be found in Appendix D. In their research study, Collie et al. (2012) concluded that teachers' perceptions should be considered in relation to their experiences in using SEL curriculum with all students. The teachers' perceptions in this study gave rise to an answer for RQ2. Confidentiality was maintained by excluding anything that could identify the teacher, class, or school (see Appendix A). No identification, such as grade level or school, is included in the results or discussion and conclusion section.

*District administrator interviews.* An additional facet of data collection included interviewing two district level administrators related to delineating the case for this research. Interviews were scheduled and took place. One, with a member of The

District's Student Support Office, was done by phone, recorded, and professionally transcribed. The second, with a member of The District's Talented and Gifted Office, was done face-to-face, recorded, and professionally transcribed using the same procedures as those done with the teachers. These research interviews consisted of conversations related to this research study. Questions were created to better understand these district leaders' perspectives on the addition of SEL curricula across the school district. Consent forms were signed, and the same questions were used for both interviews (Appendix F). The first interview, with a member of the Student Support office, provided the point-of-view in general terms for SEL instruction directed at all students. Interviewing a member of The District's Talented and Gifted department provided the focus for supporting the social and emotional development of The District's identified gifted students. For this study, interviewing was the best way to gather information on The District's, or case's, stance for the upcoming processes of adding curriculum to meet the social emotional needs of its gifted students (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As with the teacher interviews, these administrator interviews were designed as unstructured informal conversations and were flexible and intrinsic in nature. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest an unstructured and informal interview structure for use in defining the bounded case for case study research methodology. The questions used in The District administrators' interviews included background questions:

1. Tell me about your background in education.

2.  Briefly describe your current role in the district.

3.  Tell me about how this role relates to developing social emotional skills in students.

Then, questions were asked related to their positions within The District leadership:

4.  How does The District address the needs of identified gifted and talented students?

5.  How does The District address social emotional learning?

6.  How does The District address the social and emotional needs of gifted students?

7.  What needs do you see in the area of social emotional needs of gifted students?

8.  Is there anything else that you would like to tell me related to social emotional learning and/or the social emotional needs of gifted and talented students in the district?

**Curricula data.** Again, document review was the data collection method used in order to analyze the three curriculum in this study. According to Bretschneider et al. (2016), qualitative research can produce results that will help in developing curriculum. In this study, document review was used to analyze and evaluate the efficacy of universal SEL created commercially for use with all students. In Phillips and Carr (2014), a study is described in which a researcher used document review to "collect best practice research studies using a rubric she developed on which she recorded essential characteristics…Through document analysis, she discovered strengths and weaknesses" (Bretschneider et al., 2016, p. 3). This is the process that this researcher used to create the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017) (Appendix K). The various critical design features of each curriculum were analyzed and evaluated using this rubric. The evaluation

focused on the official curriculum as noted by Posner (2004). Included in this document

analysis and evaluation were texts for each curriculum, *Conscious Discipline* (Bailey,

2015), *2ⁿᵈ Edition Well-Managed Schools* (Hensley et al., 2011, 2016), and Second Step

(Committee for Children, 2014). For each curriculum reviewed, analysis was done using

its scope and sequence, curriculum guides, course outlines, standards, and lists of

objectives. The data collection first used the CASEL categories, and then did a deeper

analysis using the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017). The first criteria for scrutiny

included the following categories utilized by CASEL:

1. Grade range covered

2. Grade-by-grade sequence

3. Average number of sessions per year

4. Classroom approaches to teaching SEL

5. Opportunities to practice SEL skills

6. Contexts that promote or reinforce SEL

7. Assessment tools for monitoring implementation and student behavior ("2013
   CASEL Guide," 2013)

This gave an overview for identifying characteristics of the curriculum.

Additionally, curriculum data were collected and organized using the categories

employed by Powell and Dunlap (2009) in their evaluation of SEL programs for young

learners. This strategy allowed curricula to be classified in a way that would highlight

their comparisons for ease of meaningful comparing and contrasting in an informative

and concise manner. After naming each curriculum, the researchers classified them

regarding the following areas: purpose, target population, delivery, format, theoretical

basis, content, and methods (Powell & Dunlap, 2009, p. 3).

**Data Analysis**

In a qualitative study, data analysis takes place simultaneously with the collection

of data (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process is dynamic and iterative,

deepening as more data is collected. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest that analyzing

qualitative research data "is primarily *inductive* and *comparative*" (p. 201). The process

of data analysis is what researchers use for answering their research questions. In an

intrinsic case study, the context, depth, and breadth of the case's particularities are re-

created in the final reconstruction of the case (Grandy & Grandy, 2009). "Data analysis

will focus more on interpreting meaning rather than aggregate categorizing of data"

(Grandy & Grandy, 2009, para. 3

To understand different views and experiences in their work with gifted students,

a conversation between the researcher and the educator participants allowed different

perspectives to be seen (Creswell, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were conducted

with three participant teachers. Interviews, the most common data collection method

according to Merriam (1998), were recorded and written transcripts were made to analyze

the information gathered from each of the interview questions. Once interviews were

conducted, verbatim transcripts were created; multiple readings of the transcripts gave

opportunity for finding themes from the various points of view. Thematic analysis and

aspects of qualitative content analysis were employed by the researcher. These methods

of analysis allowed the researcher to reduce the amount of data in a systematic and

flexible way, while focusing on the codes and themes that emerged from analyzing these transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Schreier, 2013).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a foundational method for analyzing qualitative data. It can be used with various theoretical models, including that of constructivism, as in this study. The six-phase guide offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to determine patterns or themes found in this data. Open coding allowed for the organization of various properties among the three participants. To code the data, the first few readings allowed the researcher to see data grouped together in chunks. These were highlighted for repetition of words and ideas. Then, using a different color highlighter, thematic connections were noted. When these themes were connected between interviewees, those also were captured in pre-constructed tables. Various types of organizational tools were created for analyzing the data. These were: data "summary tables, an analysis outline tool, and consistency charts" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 14). Using content analysis allowed the researcher to focus on describing the data that was found (Schreier, 2013). This process lent itself to presenting the results using tables which contain text rather than numbers. Melding these two strategies worked well with the three distinct aspects of this study.

Document review was used in the development of a rich description of The District and of the samples themselves: demographics, curricular decision-making systems, goals, and individual mission statements were some of the documents used (Bretschneider et al., 2016). In document review, the data are collected in their natural setting in order to "provide contextual information and insights into 'material culture'"

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(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 252). The researcher used the internet to search for data

on the school district and each of the schools. On The District website, the mission,

vision, and goals were found and used for analysis (Appendix N). These were printed out

and visual scans were made of the information. Color coding the hard copies allowed for

a system of organization related to the contents of each of the documents. These coding

strategies, similar to those used for analyzing the interview transcripts. were used with

the documents. TAG related district school board policies and superintendent's

regulations used to put those policies in place were other documents that were gathered

for analysis. Demographic data were gathered from the state Department of Education's

website and from related sites from the state called School View and School Grades.

Additional documents were collected from the National Center for Education Statistics

website (https://nces.ed.gov). Mission statements for both The District and the individual

schools participating in this study were another piece of documentary data. According to

Stemler et al. (2011), mission statements "represent an important summation or

distillation of an organization's core goals represented by concise and simple statements

that communicate broad themes" (pp. 390-91). Other documents gathered for analysis

were School Program Characteristics and Principal's Messages found on each school's

website. Figure 17 illustrates the template created for the organization of the data

collected via the document review. It was modeled after the example given by

Bretschneider et al. (2016).

| Name of document | Date of document | Source of document | Authors of documents | Intended audience | Any bias evident | Other comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Figure 17.* Template used to organize document review data. (Bretschneider et al. 2016)

Data from the interviews, their transcripts, and follow-up emails and phone calls were also used to create rich descriptions of each of the case's samples. Available data describing each of the schools in its naturally occurring setting on official websites, gave insights into the material culture related to both their TAG and SEL programming. Teacher interviews, the second piece of data for each sample, utilized a purposeful criterion sampling method to choose the interviewees. The final set of data collected for each school was the description of the curriculum being employed school-wide for the purposes of SEL. Thematic analysis was performed on the data gathered for each sample to answer the research question about teacher perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

"Qualitative inquirers bring to their studies a different lens toward validity than that brought to traditional, quantitative studies" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). As this study is theoretically based in a social constructivist framework, trustworthiness and credibility are more accurate terms for validity of the study. Social constructivists view reality from the perception of those involved in the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). To ensure the accuracy of this study, triangulation of data and thick description of the case and the samples were two ways that the researcher ensured trustworthiness and credibility in this study. Yin (2012) considers triangulation to be a relevant process with

two or more data collections. Researching SEL curricula and its use with gifted students

is considered a naturalistic inquiry, thus the inferences drawn from this study

investigating a social or human issue can be useful to the community (Agostinho, 2005).

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this intrinsic qualitative case study was to explore the efficacy of

universal SEL curricula for serving gifted students' social and emotional developmental

needs in a large school district in a western state. Specific research questions guided the

research and data was collected to address them. Choosing three curricula already in use

in the school district and interviews with a teacher using each curriculum came next.

Documents from the curricula were then analyzed, and the Rubric was used to determine

their usefulness for supporting the unique social and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Thick narrative descriptions were created for the selected samples or embedded units.

The data from the qualitative subcases were compiled, and data was triangulated to

search for the intersection of ideas, themes, and conclusions. By drawing on multiple

forms of data, a thick narrative account was created to describe the subcases and the case

as a whole.

Compiling the basics of best practices for supporting the social emotional needs

of gifted learners provided the structure for analyzing the three curricula using the Rubric

to vet their suitability for use with gifted students. Teacher and administrator interviews

and field notes completed the case study data gathering process. In the final report, the

participants' voices were heard along with that of the author (Creswell, 2013).

A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the environment and perspectives of those involved. The interest in case study is focused on the process rather than the outcome. It is also in the context of the study rather than in a specific variable. Finally, case study is more about the discovery of new connections rather than the confirmation of previous discoveries. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research (Creswell, 2013).

Since providing gifted and talented students specialized social emotional support is not feasible with current funding allocations, exploration of the use of universal SEL may help to provide some support. This qualitative case study research design allowed a complex problem like SEL to be studied from the inside (Creswell, 2014). This methodology allows the people in the "trenches" to have a voice. Multiple perspectives of the lived experiences of teachers in the classroom brought meaning to this study (Creswell, 2013), providing a stage for these voices.

**Chapter Four: Results, Analysis and Findings**

*"We proceed by common sense and ingenuity. There are no rules, only the principles of integrity and objectivity, with a complete rejection of all authority except that of fact."*
Joel H. Hildebrand educator and chemist (1957)

**Introduction**

The purpose of this intrinsic qualitative case study was to explore the efficacy of universal social emotional learning (SEL) curricula for serving gifted students' social and emotional developmental needs in a large school district in a western state. As The District, the case in this study, moves forward with the process of identifying and possibly adopting universal SEL curricula for use in its many schools, this study may be beneficial in illuminating the needs of its talented and gifted learners related to their social and emotional development. According to Timmons and Cairns (2010), "The results of such a study would apply to this school district, but the conclusions may also be of interest to other districts attempting a similar intervention" (p. 4). In order to evaluate the curricula's efficacy for answering RQ3, the researcher created a rubric. This rubric could be used outside of this study by educational decision-makers faced with choosing a universal SEL curricula. Results from its use, as in answering the research question in this study, may lead to enlightenment on the efficacy of curricula in meeting the affective needs of gifted learners.

Chapter 4 will present key findings based on data gathered and analyzed related to The District, samples, and the creation of the Rubric used to analyze and evaluate the universal SEL curricula being employed within it. First, an overview of the research design and a description of the bounded case will be presented. Next, The District's

physical setting, mission statement, values and goals will be explored and described. An in-depth view of the samples: Schools A, B, and C, each representing an embedded unit within the case itself, will follow (Yin, 2012). Findings related to the analysis of interviews with a teacher from each school and descriptions of each curriculum evaluated are presented next. The three research questions driving this study will be used to organize the data analysis section. Each step in the research process contributed to the inductive process that led to emergent insights into the phenomenon of using universal SEL curricula as the primary means for supporting the social and emotional development of gifted learners (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) The researcher identified three different commercially created universal SEL curricula. One teacher was chosen from each school that was systemically using a universal SEL curriculum to participate in a semi-structured interview. Next, a rubric was created with which the three curricula were examined and evaluated using categories and sub-categories determined through document review and analysis, leading to the identification of topics associated with effective social and emotional developmental curricula for gifted learners. The criteria for the Rubric were developed after an extensive review of the literature related to affective support for gifted learners. A document review process was employed in the collection of data leading to the creation of this rubric (Bretschneider et al., 2016). Documents were collected and analyzed for the description and exploration of the case. The thick description of the case came from the exploration of the three sample schools, teachers, and curricula.

**Research Design**

The bounded system, or unit. for this study was one school district, which both Creswell (2013) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest for a case study focused on educational research questions. The research methodology chosen for investigating the phenomenon of SEL in a real-life context was qualitative intrinsic case study. According to Yin (2003, 2009), case study is a useful strategy when researching something as complex as SEL being taught within the context of a complex system, such as a school district, school, or classroom. Flexibility in gathering data was an advantage of the qualitative case study methodology (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). This study benefited from this flexibility by collecting data from a variety of sources: interviews, documents, and results from the creation and utilization of the Rubric to evaluate each curriculum (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research is appropriate for examining school district educational interventions that have "complex and varied data collection requirements" (Timmons & Cairns, 2012, p. 4). By studying the phenomena through the sampled embedded units, and from various points of view, the researcher was able to develop a cogent understanding of universal SEL curricula's efficacy for gifted learners. The purpose of this intrinsic qualitative case study was to explore the efficacy of universal SEL curricula for serving gifted students' social and emotional developmental needs in a large school district in a western state.

To reach this understanding, the research questions, which guided the work of addressing the problem statement, were as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of gifted learners addressed by universal social and emotional learning curricula?

2. What are teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the universal social emotional learning curricula employed in their classrooms for their gifted and talented students?

3. How does utilization of universal social emotional learning curricula address the social and emotional needs of gifted students?

**Descriptive Data**

According to Yin (1994), it is important to have a general analytic strategy for analyzing the evidence in case study research. One analytic strategy is that of developing a case description. Describing the "general characteristics and relations of the phenomenon in question" (p. 5) allows the researcher to organize the results within a descriptive framework. This section will describe the case, the embedded units, and the three curricula using such a framework. Baxter and Jack (2008) explain that describing "the context within which the phenomenon is occurring as well as the phenomenon itself," (p. 555) is an important aspect of the analysis process.  Since qualitative research is basically interpretive in nature, the researcher's interpretation of the data led to "developing a description of an individual setting, analyzing data for themes or categories, and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusions about its meaning personally and theoretically" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). In an intrinsic case study, the goal is not to avoid generalization, but to offer a thick description of the case being studied so that the readers can draw their own interpretations, generalizing from within the

presented study (Stake, 1995). Creswell (2013) also recommends intrinsic case study when the focus is the case itself, as in the process of evaluating a program, such as the inclusion of SEL. In a qualitative study, there is a reciprocal process in which description of data leads to interpretation of data, while explanation can "serve to clarify the description and illuminate the details" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 134). The following descriptive data is being used to assist in the interpretation of its significance for the interpretations of the findings, elucidations, and assertions of this study.

**School district description.** The setting of this qualitative study was a large metropolitan school district in a western state. During the year this study was conducted, 2016-17, The District had almost 31,000 Pre-K-12 students, taught by over 1,500 teachers, at over 50 different school sites, 30 of which educated elementary grade students. Figure 18 shows the 2016-17 demographic information for The District related to ethnic and racial specifics. Of students who identify a gender, 48.3% were listed as female and 51.7% male. This data was found via documents identified through internet searches, and through searches of The District and the schools' websites.

*District guidelines.* By state law, each public school district and individual public/charter school is required to create a Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) for its specific annual goals. The UIP information for the district in this study was found on the state's Department of Education (https://www.cde.state.co.us) website page devoted to districts and their annual goals. One of the goals for this district included extensive district level support for preparing schools to implement Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Root causes attributed to the need for

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## Student Race and Ethnicity
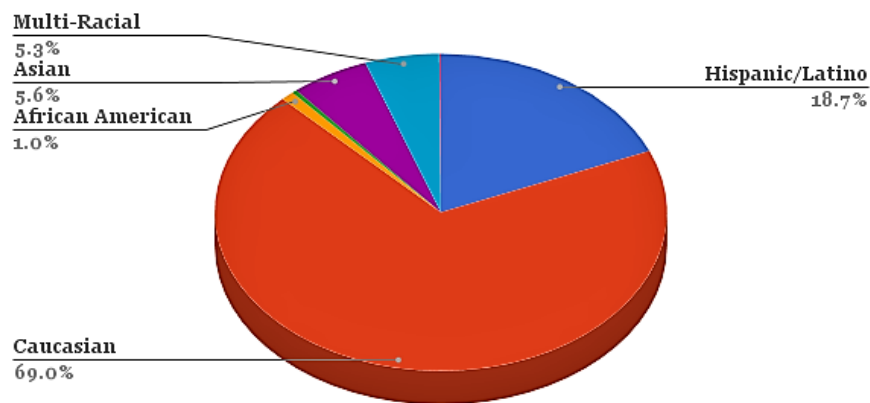


*Figure 1*8 The District Ethnic and Racial Population 2016-2017 School Year

such a goal, found on the UIP document itself, were located in the section labeled

"Priority Performance Challenge." The causes center on the "Academic Growth for

Students in Programs" section. Specific Root Causes related to this study are:

- Limited review of student progress, needs identification and

  differentiation: Lack of a systematic, periodic review of student progress

  and identification of individual students' specific needs as well as

  subsequent differentiation;

- Inadequate Social Emotional Learning resources

  (https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview)

The District's guiding documents, its Vision, Mission, and four specific Value

Statements were published on its website (Appendix N). Three specific goals were

created as a focus of its five-year plan, spanning from 2013-2018. Five strategies for

attaining those goals had been created and were also shared on its website.

***The District: Vision, mission, values, goals, and strategies.*** In 2013, The District gathered stakeholders to rewrite its vision, mission, and value statements. In their five-year plan for 2013-2018, they also outlined three goals and strategies with which they would achieve those goals. Appendix N contains the text for the guidance statements related to these district documents. The Purpose Statement mentions that The District is already one of the highest achieving districts in the state, and that there is a high level of shared determination among the students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders to make it the educational answer for each student…regardless of circumstance or background. Each child brings a unique and worthwhile contribution to our learning community.

Different aspects of these guidelines mention supporting the social and emotional needs of typical students and unique students' social and emotional needs. However, there was no evidence of any systemic SEL supports focused specifically on the needs of gifted learners. As gifted students fit the qualification of unique students, these guiding principles speak to the importance of those needs. Table 2 presents an analysis of The District's guiding documents in terms of words and phrases that pertain to SEL in general and those which relate to supporting talented and gifted learners.

Table 2

*Analysis of District Guiding Documents*

| Part of Guidelines | Key Words SEL | Key Words TAG |
| --- | --- | --- |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Purpose | Each child brings…a worthwhile contribution | Each child brings…a unique contribution, educational answer |
| Vision | Confidently confront | Our children's greatest abilities, curious |
| Mission | Civically engaged lives | Challenging, all children thrive |
| Value Statements | Respect the value of each student, social emotional well-being of students | Incorporate strengths, unique learning needs, intellectual growth |
| Goals and Strategies | Meaningful and engaging opportunities, social emotional well-being, safe, healthy, inclusive environment, using multiple measures, enter school ready to learn | Address the unique learning needs, assess the success of each child, continue to learn |

Note. TAG = talented and gifted  SEL= social emotional learning

One finding from the document review is related to the TEA positions, school personnel responsible for the gifted students' ALPs, which include the required social and emotional goal. Although this district's gifted learners spend their days in regular education classrooms, the creation of these ALPs is the responsibility of part-time tutors hired for that purpose. Each school has a part-time TEA whose job is to oversee the creation of ALPs with student and parent input. They are also charged with being an advocate for gifted students, conducting identification testing, and communicating with parents, teachers, and students related to the ALP goals. These part-time positions require only two years of college and no prior background or experience in gifted education, although an informed assessment of these positions has determined that many of the

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employees filling these positions have much higher qualifications. Recently, those in these positions were also required to enter all the ALP data online. With 15% of the student population identified as gifted, this would be a large amount of work. Document review and analysis included the state's Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) and the Rules for Administration of the ECEA. The researcher determined that state statute allows personnel in this position, with the listed job requirements, to provide some of the academic and social emotional programming for gifted students; however, one stipulation of those rules is the statement that those who are responsible for providing "instruction, counseling, coordination and other programming for gifted students… shall be knowledgeable in the characteristics, differentiated instructional methods and competencies in the special education of gifted students" ("Rules for the Administration," 2016, p. 108). During the year this study took place, there were qualified staff members in the part-time positions in some schools, but only because they exceeded the qualifications for the positions. The job description clearly states that staff in those positions are not to be providing instruction for the gifted students. Teachers and counselors were the ones responsible for instruction and counseling. The district has no guidelines requiring the training described above for teachers and counselors.

*CASEL report and recommendations.* The District requested a team from CASEL to conduct a "Readiness and Engagement Analysis" to determine the leadership and staff commitment to moving towards a districtwide SEL curriculum adoption and implementation in the spring of 2016. Goals for this analysis were to conduct a readiness assessment and a series of recommendations for dealing with challenges and for creating

implementation strategies. The CASEL team conducted interviews and observations of district leadership and staff, as well as conducted three site-visits to a (1) Pre-K-8 School, (2) high school, and (3) an elementary school (not one of this study's sample schools). The final report contained 10 topic areas with strengths, challenges, short-term (year 1) recommendations, and long-term (2-3 year) recommendations. The short and long-term recommendations were geared towards The District hiring a director of SEL, allocating funds for undertaking a needs assessment across the district, followed by plans to identify and implement evidence-based programs. These steps included supporting this implementation with the integration of SEL into the MTSS process and using problem-based learning (PBL) instructional strategies for the integration of SEL into all grade levels and all subjects. A summary of the report's analysis appears in Appendix O.

*Administrator interviews.* An addition to the descriptive data regarding the case, or The District, came from interviews conducted by the researcher with district level officials. Questions for these interviews can be found in Appendix F. The interview of the district administrator from the Talented and Gifted Department was conducted face-to-face; and the Student Support Office (SSO) administrator's interview was done via phone. Both interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed. The purposeful sampling of these two district level personnel was based on their perspectives of the adoption of universal SEL curricula in the case of the SSO and the TAG perspective on the social and emotional needs unique to gifted learners.

*Student Support Office administrator.* After several face-to-face and phone meetings and email conversations, the researcher had the opportunity to conduct a semi-structured phone interview with an administrator in the office charged with working on social emotional programming for The District. Initially a question about the educational background of this person led to an explanation of his start as a secondary teacher and his master's degree in counseling. Before his work in The District's office for Student Support, he was also a school administrator. At the time of the interview, some of his responsibility was "around the direction of the district's work around social and emotional learning." He explained that his role was "to help this [school district] system understand and build capacity around how to" develop the social and emotional skills of all students. He saw the general purpose of social and emotional learning as being "all about development of skills to have more success in life, which leads to better academic success."

The next topics related to his knowledge around any specific social and emotional needs of gifted learners. His explanation included a discussion about the students' ALPs as a means for getting their academic needs met. There was a mismatch, however, related to his explanation of the role of the TAG educational advisors (TEAs). He called them gifted and talented liaisons and explained that they "receive training around working specifically with students who have been identified as gifted and talented, and students are given both social and emotional and academic support through these liaisons and through others including counselors, teachers, [and] school administrators to help meet their individualized needs." According to the CDE Gifted Education Plan on their

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website found at http://www.cde.state.co.us, for The District the role of TEAs is to support schools and liaise with the district office, not to provide direct instructional services or programming.

When asked about the social and emotional needs for The District's gifted students, he answered that he thought everybody had individual needs. Further, he answered that "you often see … particularly [in] profoundly gifted students can struggle socially." He added that, "Many gifted students can struggle emotionally from having some perfectionism and other challenges that go along with being really good at stuff and having learning come relatively easy for much of their life and when learning gets more difficult, often times students who have found school to be relatively … easy can struggle emotionally in the longer term because when things get harder [*sic*]."

At the end of the interview, when asked what else he would like to add, he explained, "I do think that social and emotional learning is good for all kids whether they be students who are identified talented and gifted, students who are just your average kid, average student in the school to students who struggle one way or another." Advocating for SEL in general, he explained that "having social and emotional skills and strong social and emotional confidence is key for our academic learning." He mentioned that studies have shown that in not meeting student social and emotional needs, "We are missing what I think to be the foundation of learning." In his conclusion, he explained that he thinks "Different groups of students will have unique needs," calling for smaller group work and staff training "to understand the needs of different smaller groups without overgeneralization." Finally, his last words on unique needs were that

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"commonalities amongst students and understanding how to address the unique needs of a group of students who have those commonalities, I think is important."

*Talented and Gifted Office administrator.* In her third year as a teacher on special assignment in the office of talented and gifted, my second interviewee from The District's administrative point of view was clearly well versed in the nature and needs of gifted students. Graduate work in the field of gifted education makes her the most qualified person in The District on the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. After sharing her educational background, the next question asks her to delineate her role in The District. She "directs all of those [TEAs] … that's pretty much what I do." She further explains what the job of the TEA is: "The TAG Advisor in each building is basically in a tutor position which runs all of our ALPs and coordinates those and works with parents to get that information across. I actually direct all of those [TEAs]."

Next, she was asked to talk about how her role related to the development of social emotional skills. Her response began, "I think that there's a lot more that we could be doing with this role … it's just me right now" directing this work. "We do offer on our advanced learning plans, as mandated by the state, there is [a] requirement for two goals for students, and one is an academic and the other is an affective goal." Continuing, she explains that getting the information out to the TEAs about how to write those goals is part of her job. She is also in charge of coordinating facilitated parent groups to talk about different aspects of giftedness, mostly focused on social emotional needs.

There were several supports in place for the social and emotional development of

The District's gifted learners. Only the ALPs, however, were systemically mandated. She

reiterated that with the

"advanced learning plans, mandated by the state, we are trying to get more information to educators to try to be able to write that affective goal so that it is something that the students know what it is, the teacher[s] know…the parents know what it is and making it something that actually has meaning to it."

At the secondary level, supports she discussed were lunch bunch meetings with TEAs,

with students voluntarily meeting in a "comfortable safe environment" to discuss

affective issues. In addition, "a couple other high schools … offer … freshman seminar

which included gifted kids only, and also cover emotional types of issues in those."

In terms of academic needs for gifted learners, she pointed out that "our schools

are site-based, which is wonderful in some sense, but in some senses, it's not because we

don't have total control of what happens in the building especially from my department,

and we can advise and encourage" appropriate course work. The TEAs are in each

building, but "Their job is not necessarily to give instruction. It is to collaborate with

ALPs, talk to parents … try to be transparent so we know what's going on in that area

[academics]." According to this district expert, appropriate academic offerings are

important for gifted learners.

"What we say from my office is that we like to see more of an inclusion in the classroom and more differentiation in the classroom. … We're talking about flexible groupings where our gifted kids have peers and the groups they're in … We're also talking about project-based learning, which is good for gifted kids. We're trying to get more training on and provide more opportunities for teachers to get that type of training."

In this district, although the advisors are responsible for the clerical aspects of the ALPs, it is up to classroom teachers to implement goals related to the school.

When asked about how The District addresses the general SEL of its students, she defers specifics, as this is not part of her position. However, she did say, "I have heard that there is going to be a curriculum coming in, that they are focusing on social emotional." When discussing this possibility further, she explains that

> "I would like to be part of that [decision]. I think it's important that our office and perhaps my director has some involvement in that [we] have some awareness of what it is and whether or not there're going to be actual tools in there for gifted kids."

The final portion of this interview began with an open-ended question about other things she would like to say regarding the social and emotional needs of the gifted in The District. She explained that she hears from parents of students who are being successful academically, but whose social emotional growth is not being addressed. Additionally, her office hears from parents of students who feel that their student's social emotional needs are impeding their academic progress. Her overview of the current social emotional offerings is, "I see that there's a lot that needs to be put in place for gifted kids." Noting that kids with high intensities may not be able to succeed academically, there are even concerns about district suicides possibly having a correlation to identified TAG students. "They're not going to be able to be successful academically if we're not able to meet them as a whole child." Her concluding remarks point out her concern that focusing on academics alone has perhaps caused "Educators to not really look deeply enough at those kiddos and what their needs are."

**Sample Descriptions.** With information from the community partner, the

researcher purposefully chose schools that were using a commercially prepared universal

SEL curricula school-wide. Only elementary schools fit this description, and the

researcher identified three schools within those criteria to work with. Once a school using

a curriculum was selected, a criterion-based selection process was employed for

identification of teachers who had taught the curriculum for at least one school year.

Another criterion was that the teacher had identified gifted and talented in their

heterogeneously grouped regular education classrooms. Emails were sent to each teacher,

resulting in one participant from each school. Contextual data collected via the online

Principal's Message, the school's program characteristics, and blurbs related to special

programs and opportunities, added depth to the school description. For each school, the

descriptive data is reported in the data analysis section. Table 3 shows details about the

teachers' classes for each sample.

Table 3

*Site (Samples) Details 2016-2017*

| Sample | Curriculum | Class Size | Is teacher a parent? | TAG ID Students | Years of Teaching | Experience with other SEL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School A Teacher A | *Well-Managed Schools* | 23 | yes | 2 | 17 | No |
| School B Teacher B | *Second Step* | 24 | yes | 6 | 6 | Yes |
| School C | *Conscious Discipline* | 19 | yes | 9 | 8 | No |

Teacher C

Table 4 describes the demographics for each school, using information collected through document analysis. This data is related to special program enrollment, including free and reduced lunch, SPED, TAG, and ELL during the 2016-2017 school year. The likelihood is that many students crossover between and among those programs.

Table 4

*Demographic Data for Case and Embedded Units 2016-2017*

| Case or Embedded Units | *Total Pop.* | FRSL % | ELL % | TAG % | Caucasian % | SPED/ 504 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Case (District) | 30,836 | 20.1% | 9.8% | 15% | 69.0% | 14.7% |
| School A | 408 | 34.6 | 13 | 6.6 | 66.2 | 18.4 |
| School B | 438 | 3.6 | 2.5 | 7.3 | 76.9 | 5.9 |
| School C | 470 | 51.8 | 35.7 | 15.1 | 32.3 | 16.8 |

Note. FRSL – Free and Reduced School Lunch, ELL – English Language Learners, TAG – Talented and Gifted, SPED/504 – Students on an IEP or with a 504 Plan (*The District* Enrollment Documents, 2017).

**School A.** School A is a neighborhood school, meaning that students are predominately from the attendance area of that school. In a state and a district with open enrollment, this is one facet of a school's description. The 408 Pre-K – 5 students

attending the school during the 2016-2017 school year were just over 66% Caucasian or white and 43% of the students came from families considered low income. The suspension rate for the school was 5% for all economic and racial groups, and 10% of the students were considered chronically absent (15+ days). Of the teachers on staff, 96% of them had three or more years of teaching experience. The teacher to student ratio was 15:1; although that included all teachers on staff and does not necessarily transfer to class sizes. Standardized test scores were above the state average, as was student growth data. Of the total population of the school, 6.6% of the students were identified by the school district as talented and gifted.

*School B.* School B was also a neighborhood school. The 438 K – 5 students attending the school during the 2016-2017 school year were just under 77% Caucasian or white and 3% of the students came from families considered low income. No discipline statistics were given, but 6% of the student population was chronically absent. Of the teachers on staff, 88% had three or more years of teaching experience. The teacher to student ratio was 17:1. Standardized test scores were far above the state average, and student growth data showed improvement from the year before. Talented and gifted identified students were 7.3% of the school's population.

*School C.* School C, a focus school, has specific criteria for enrolling students living in the community. Students are all open enrolled from other neighborhood school attendance areas. The 470 Pre-K – 5 students attending the school during the 2016-2017 school year were 33% Caucasian or white and 49% of the students came from families considered low income. No discipline statistics were given, but 9% of the

student population was chronically absent. Of the teachers on staff, 100% had three or more years of teaching experience. The teacher to student ratio was 16:1. Standardized test scores were far above the state average, and student growth data showed improvement from the year before. Talented and gifted identified students were 7.3% of the school's population.

Through document analysis, the district website and the websites of the schools in this study were analyzed in terms of the published school descriptions and other online information. For each school, The District listed a web page with detailed descriptive information about the schools, their programs, their strengths, and any type of focus program that was included at the school. This information was titled "Principal's Message," "School Program Characteristics," and one of the schools also had a page entitled "Special Programs and Opportunities." These documents were analyzed for information regarding talented and gifted goals and programs, and insights into the schools' approaches to SEL. Table 5 contains the results from this data analysis.

Table 5

*Document Analysis regarding Schools' TAG and SEL Foci*

| Schools | TAG | SEL |
|---|---|---|
| School A | Experiential, inquiry, interdisciplinary methods; Using strengths; Interventions for…advanced learners; reduced class sizes; TAG students' Advanced Learning Plans; utilize cluster grouping, tutorials, and subject advancement; Attention to individual student needs; Acceleration; Opportunity for math acceleration; variety of instructional strategies; hands-on projects; inquiry based; real life math application; Talented and Gifted funding is utilized to serve identified TAG student and also offer enrichment activities for all students. Clubs; special services for students … who are talented and gifted | Affective coaching [under SPED]; true sense of community; focus on the whole child; behavioral, emotional, and academic growth; |
| School B | Interdisciplinary connections; investigative & creative classroom culture; develops thinking skills & evokes the use of critical thinking; challenge students to excel to their maximum potential; stimulate intellectual curiosity; encouraged to ask questions; special services available for students who are talented and gifted; science presentation experience; enrichment activities | Develop successful relationships with peers; creates and environment … can feel both self-assured and accepting of others; respecting and valuing individual differences; appreciating cultural plurality; teaching students about smart choices regarding personal, community and global health |
| School C | Talented and Gifted services both in class and pull-out; apprenticeships for 5th graders; DI; math acceleration; reduced class sizes; differentiated instruction; research projects; support the success of every student | Encouraged to work cooperatively; Student Mediators; intercultural unity; people of diverse backgrounds…work together harmoniously for the good of all children; working in integrated group; peer models; full time counselor [atypical]; restorative practices; community of learners |

**SEL curricula.** CASEL used a set of criteria with which to organize various SEL curricula to organize the overview of each curriculum for easier comparison. The results from this organizational and descriptive measure can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

*SEL Curricula Descriptive Data*

| Category | Well-Managed Schools | Second Step | Conscious Discipline |
|---|---|---|---|
| Publisher & Year | Boys Town Press (2015) | Committee for Children (2014) | Living Guidance, Inc. (2015) |
| Grade Range Covered | PK - 12 | PK - 8 | Ages 0 – 12 |
| Grade-by-Grade sequence | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Average number of sessions per year | Daily | 22-28 across 5 days/week | Daily |
| Classroom approaches to teaching SEL | Proactive and Planned Teaching practices<br><br>Instruction and practice of 16 Social Life Skills | Explicit skills instruction | $1^{st}$ teacher personal growth<br><br>$2^{nd}$ teaching students the levels in Figure 19 integrated into all school area content |
| Opportunities to practice | On-going school-wide approach | Follow-through lessons after each introductory skill lesson | On-going school-wide approach |
| Contexts that promote SEL skills | School-wide | School-wide | School-wide |
| Theoretical background | Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory | Bandura's Modeling/Social Cognitive Theory | Theories integrating social, emotional, cultural & cognitive |

| | | domains, including constructivist and relational-cultural perspectives |
|---|---|---|

Note. Based on CASEL's Rating Framework ("2013 CASEL Guide," 2013)

***Well-Managed Schools.*** School A was in their fourth year of using the Well-Managed Schools curriculum. Initially, they began with a multi-day training, and have continued with refreshers each school year. The Well-Managed Schools' basis is "The Boys Town Education Model (BTEM) and Methods that have transformed schools across the Country" (Hensley et al., 2016, cover). It is a multi-component curriculum designed to use healthy relationships and explicit instruction of social skills to address challenging behavior (Fluke, Peterson, & Oliver, 2013). The purpose for this curriculum is to manage student behavior, build relationships, employ "proactive classroom management practices, and social skills instruction to reduce behaviors that interfere with learning, and to empower students with self-management skills" (Hawkins, 2016, para.1). The target population, according to its website, is "every type of student, in every type of environment" (boystowntraining.org, "Boys Town Mission") Programming is differentiated for grade levels, serving students from Pre-K through high school. The number one listed result, however, is to reduce office referrals and disruptive behavior.

The delivery model for Well-Managed schools is rooted in a three-pronged approach. First, the goal is to prevent problem behavior. Their suggestions are to ensure that the school and classrooms "set clear specific behavioral expectations before problems occur" (Well-Managed Schools, 2012, p. 127). Consistency of expectations, proactive teaching strategies, and utilization of opportunities for co-curricular application

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of social instructions are all included in this first prong. The second prong in their delivery model is to encourage positive behavior. Specific suggestions for this are to "teach social skills in response to appropriate student behaviors, reinforce students as soon as possible [and to] administer positive consequences following appropriate behavior" (Well-Managed Schools, 2012, p. 127). Finally, the third prong is the correction of problem behavior. Included in this aspect is addressing, correcting, and applying consistent expectations for even small, inappropriate behaviors. The Participant Handbook (2012) concludes by reminding teachers to ensure that they use a "pleasant voice tone, comfortable proximity, eye contact and appropriate humor" while correcting behaviors (p. 127).

Whole classroom universal instruction is the aim of this intervention delivered by classroom teachers who are encouraged to go through training. Available training includes 2-day programs, online workshops and training, customized trainings and individual online courses for specific topics such as bullying and conflict resolution (Fluke et al., 2013). The format for implementation of the Well-Managed Schools curriculum is very structured and often scripted. It includes preventative social skills instruction, preventative teaching strategies, and planned teaching. The initial aspect of the instructional format involves preventative social skills instruction. Teachers are given a list of 16 distinct social skills, each with 3 to 5 observable progressive steps based on task-analysis to be taught and practiced. The process of instruction on these skills begins with pre-assessment of individual students through collecting data via observation,

informal discussion with other staff members, and even through office referral data (ORD) (Hensley et al., 2016).

The Well-Managed Schools curriculum's basis is the Boys Town Education Model (BTEM), "rooted in applied behavior analysis and social learning theory (Hensley et al., 2016, pp. 7-8). Bandura's Modeling Theory/Social Cognitive Theory "suggests that individuals tend to emulate the behaviors of significant others – individuals who are perceived as competent, trusting, and a major source of support, direction and reinforcement," such as a teacher, often second only to learners' parents as student role models (Hensley et al., 2011, p. 22). This theory encourages teachers to remember that teaching does not always lead to student learning. According to the SCT, "a behavior is learned when the learner successfully demonstrates it over time in appropriate settings" (Hensley et al., 2016, p. 39). This model encourages teachers' awareness of behaviors that occur in a larger context of antecedents, such as events or environmental conditions present before a behavior occurs. The second aspect is the student behavior itself, followed by the third step, the consequences which follow that behavior.

According to Truby (2014), the BTEM consists of eight basic guidelines:

1. Build Strong Relationships

2. Teach Essential Social Skills

3. Get on the Same Page

4. Be a Role Model

5. Clarify Classroom and School Rules

6. Teach All Students Problem Solving (Using the SODAS acronym)

- S = Define the Situation

- O = Examine Options

- D = Determine Disadvantages

- A = Determine Advantages

- S = Decide on a Solution and Practice

7. Set Appropriate Consequences

8. Praise Students for Good Choices (Hensley et al., 2011).

The book outlining the curriculum is organized to address these guidelines with additional sections on "Addressing Students' Behaviors" and "Communicating with Stakeholders" (Hensley et al., 2011, p. i).

Content for this curriculum is organized into four specific areas. Building positive relationships is the foundation. Relationships between students, students and teachers, and staff members with each other are each addressed. Kindness, empathy, and respectful communication are all encouraged for all staff members (Fluke et al, 2013). Modeling by staff members, a key component of the Bandura's (1999, 2006) SCT, allows staff to be role models for students. School staff members are encouraged to show compassion, respectful behaviors, and to combine firmness with compassion when setting limits for students. In addition to relationship building, the curriculum is designed to teach social skills, reinforce those same skills, and respond to problem behavior using techniques based in the above along with the utilization of pre-determined and communicated consequences.

The methods and lessons, in the form of a variety of lesson plans, student literature, training blogs, and activities are available once PD is purchased from Boys Town. CASEL's five competencies for SEL, Goleman's (2005) emotional intelligence theory, and skill types based on recent research into executive function (Morin, 2014) support the grounding in social skills lessons at the heart of this program. Appendix O lists the 16 essential skills from a school found on The District's website. Figure 19 comes from the most recent iteration of the curriculum. In it, Hensley et al. (2016) have included a diagram which parallels MTSS, presenting a framework for providing multiple levels of SEL support for the different levels of student need. The pyramid represents the relative percentage of students typically needing differentiated support for their SEL needs; universal or tier 1 with approximately 80% of students, secondary or tier 2 with approximately 15% of the students, and the tertiary interventions or tier 3 which are reserved for the approximately 5% of the students requiring very specialized classroom management strategies.
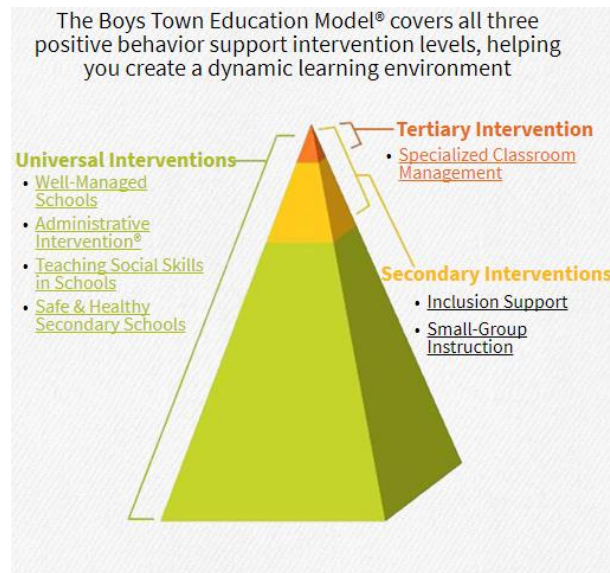
*Figure 19* Boys Town Training Programs offer training for all three levels of SEL

Interventions (Hensley et al., 2016)

     ***Second Step.*** In School B, the principal chose to begin systemic use of the

Second Step curriculum mid-way through the previous school year. The year of the study

was the first full year using it, and each grade level had their designated curriculum kit.

According to Frey, Hirschstein, and Guzzo (2000), Second Step (Committee for

Children, 2014) "is a violence prevention curriculum created with the dual goals of

reducing development of social emotional, and behavioral problems and promoting the

development of core competencies" (p. 102). It is primarily designed to proactively

decrease aggression and to promote social competence. The curriculum teaches skills

using songs, stories, and games in which lessons are designed to "help children

understand and manage their emotions, control their reactions, be aware of others'

feelings and develop problem-solving and responsible decision-making skills" (Jones et

al., 2017, p.1).

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The target population is children from Pre-K through grade 8. Classroom teachers are the primary deliverers of the content, and it is designed for universal classroom use. There is also a component designed to share lessons with parents and families, with at-home lessons provided.  The grade level curricula come in a kit. The one analyzed for this study was that for grades 3-5. The weekly lessons are designed to take 20-45 minutes on the first day, and then four follow-up lessons of 5-10 minutes are designed to be used the other days of that week. This format is designed to be used on a weekly basis for 22-28 weeks. The lessons begin with a scripted teacher-friendly lesson plan card introducing the concepts for that lesson, posters outlining the specific lesson skills, and DVDs related to the topic at hand. Brain Builder frames are employed to develop "cognitive regulation skill, a discussion of a story or a video with an SEL theme, an opportunity for students to practice new skills, and a brief review of lesson concepts" (Jones et al., 2017, p. 161). Depending on the week's lesson, the follow-up activities may contain more Brain Builder games, songs, writing, drawing, or skill practice.

The organization of the lessons follow the logic model illustrated in Figure 20. The direct instruction of the intervention components, practice opportunities, and reinforcement from teacher and home are designed to improve student behavior as the intermediate outcome, which, it is planned, will lead to positive long-term outcomes (Sabina et al., 2014). Classroom teachers deliver instruction, and training for teachers is available both online and in the notebook format of the curriculum. Unfortunately, very little student discussion is encouraged in the instructional format. As in the Well-

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Managed Schools (Hensley et al., 2011, 2016), the theoretical basis for Second Step is also Bandura's (1999, 2006) SCT.

The content for Second Step involves four units: empathy, emotion management, problem solving, and the most recent addition in 2012, skills for learning. The skills for learning encompass attention, working memory, and inhibitory control. Jones et al. (2017) rate skill focus areas as balanced between cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal domains "each targeted by 40-52% of the program activities [but] little to no focus on character (7%) or mindset (1%)" (p. 163).

| Intervention Components | Intermediate Outcomes | Long-Term Outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| Classroom Lessons, Review & Practice, Reinforcement & Home Links<br><br>**Topics**<br>Brain Builders<br>Skills for Learning<br>Empathy<br>Emotion Management<br>Problem Solving | Increased social emotional competence<br><br>Increased self-regulation<br><br>Improved classroom behavior<br><br>Increased adacemic enablers (attendance, on-task, task completion | Increase school success<br><br>Increased school connectedness and belonging<br><br>Improved peer relationships<br><br>Reduced external & internatlizing behavior patterns |

*Figure 20.* Second Step's Logic Model (Low et al., 2015)

***Conscious Discipline.*** A group of representative staff members from School C, previewed several different SEL curricula and introduced Conscious Discipline to their primary grades the previous year. Teacher C had a grade level that was just being introduced to the program for the first time that year. There were school-wide assemblies to refresh and introduce the curriculum to new students and this grade level. A trained coach also worked in the classroom with the teacher during the early parts of the school

year.  Conscious Discipline, developed by a teacher for teachers, integrates SEL and

classroom management, as does Well-Managed Schools (Hensley et al., 2016). Bailey's

(2015) approach is unique, however, in that it shifts the focus for classroom management

away from reward and punishment to a system that instead focuses on creating a culture

"based on safety, connection, and problem solving" (p. 19). Conceptually, this program

begins with first teaching the adults how to "manage their thoughts, feelings and actions"

(Jones et al., 2017, p. 221), then empowers them to teach those same strategies to

students. "The program is called 'Conscious' Discipline because it fosters the

development of a person's consciousness of his/her own mental models of learning, of

teaching and of self" (Bailey, 2011, p.1). In *Conscious Discipline*, Bailey (2015)

dedicates her book to personal transformation:

> Personal transformation is vital for embedding resilience in our families, schools, communities, nation, and the world. May we each be willing to embrace change in order to strengthen education, sustain our planet, and secure a bright future for all children! (p. iii)

The purpose of this curriculum is not to teach life skills in isolation, as many

character education and bully-proofing curricula do, but to treat each classroom and

school as its own culture. Its goal is also to immerse students in an environment where

staff members "walk the talk," using teachable moments to "be the change" they are

leading (Bailey, 2015, p. 7). The main impetus for the creation of this curriculum is to

build a classroom and school culture based on modifying both teacher and child behavior.

The transformational goal for focusing on giving adults a means to "manage their

thoughts, feelings, and actions in the face of daily stressors, as well as to teach these

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skills to students" (Jones et al., 2017, p. 221), sets it apart from the previous two curricula.

Target population, delivery method, and format for instruction all are unique from the data collected about the previous two programs. The target population for the overall program is younger than the others, and the teacher training is much more intensive. Conscious Discipline's target population is for Pre-K – age 12. There are additional programs for younger children. One is entitled *Feeling Buddies Curriculum* specifically for Pre-K and primary grades, and another is *Baby Doll Circle Time* for ages 0-5. Teacher training involves teachers learning all the skills that the students will use, as applied to their adult lives, and then modeling those during their work with students. A variety of options for training includes two-day workshops at the Conscious Discipline facilities, individual school sites, and facilitated online courses. Teacher self-study and ongoing coaching support is another important aspect of the delivery for this curriculum. The overall program's format is designed to be "multi-year with an ongoing infusion throughout everyday instruction" (Jones et al., 2017, p. 221). There are no scripted lessons; instead teachers are teaching sets of strategies that students and teachers can use throughout their day. Daily rituals and procedures are part of the program's delivery, including starting each day with a Brain Smart start, class meeting, and students' daily jobs. Most of the curriculum depends on "transforming daily conflict into an opportunity to teach critical life skills through empowered adults" (Finn, 2015, p. 16).

Theoretically, Conscious Discipline has its basis in "a constructivist and relational cultural perspective" (Bailey, 2011, p. 1). The program is based on a very integrated

theoretical platform combining "all domains of learning: social, emotional, physical, cultural, and cognitive" (p.1). Social science theorists Piaget and Vygotsky's theories on cognitive development, zone of proximal development, and scaffolding provide the foundation for this curriculum (Bailey, 2011). Culturally, Bailey cites Jean Baker Miller's relational-cultural theory, a belief that conflict is the source of all growth. From the psychoanalytic and humanistic perspective, she utilized the work of Erikson, Rogers and Maslow based on the synergy of emotional and cognitive domains of learning. Gesell's maturational explanation of the adult modeling and guiding the child's growth also influenced this work. The relational-cultural view suggests that habitual disengagement and disconnect is the source of distress for many people (Bailey, 2011). Conscious Discipline introduces School Family as a way of enriching all connections at school. This includes relationships among adults, children, and adults with children. These connections are building on "authenticity, mutual empathy and respect, and healthy conflict resolution strategies" (Bailey, 2011, p. 3). This "tapestry" (p. 4) of scientific foundational support continues with behaviorists' environmental and social interaction from Skinner and Bandura. The ideas that adults bring their social history and memories into their work are part of the footing for the adult first personal growth focus. Child psychotherapy and several other scientific basics (i.e., physics, neuroscience, neurocardiology, and kinesiology) round out the plethora of contributions to Conscious Discipline's theoretical basis.

The content of Conscious Discipline's curriculum is diagrammed in Figure 22. The Brain State Model, at the first level and foundation of the pyramid, pertains to a

neurodevelopmental model related to the different parts of the brain. These three parts are represented by a safety or survival zone, the connection or emotional zone, and the problem solving or executive (prefrontal cortex) zone. The next level of the curriculum assuring safety in the classroom comes from the Seven Powers for Conscious Adults. The book subtitles this personal growth for adults as, "You can't teach what you don't know" (Bailey, 2015, p. 17). Moving up the pyramid, The School Family builds on the last level. This represents "building connections through a culture of compassion" (p. 17), relating to the connection aspect of the Brain State Model. This level is based in the cultural model of a healthy family relationship and the importance of intrinsic motivation as "the only means for achieving lifelong learning and healthy values" (p. 60). From this portion of the curriculum emerge the routines, rituals, and classroom structures mentioned earlier. Finally, the last level of the content, the Seven Skills of Discipline or problem-solving level, comes into play. The acronym SPACE outlines the skills taught in this portion of the curriculum.

S = Solutions

P = Positive Intent

A = Academic Integration

C = Consequences

E = Executive Skills (p. 253)
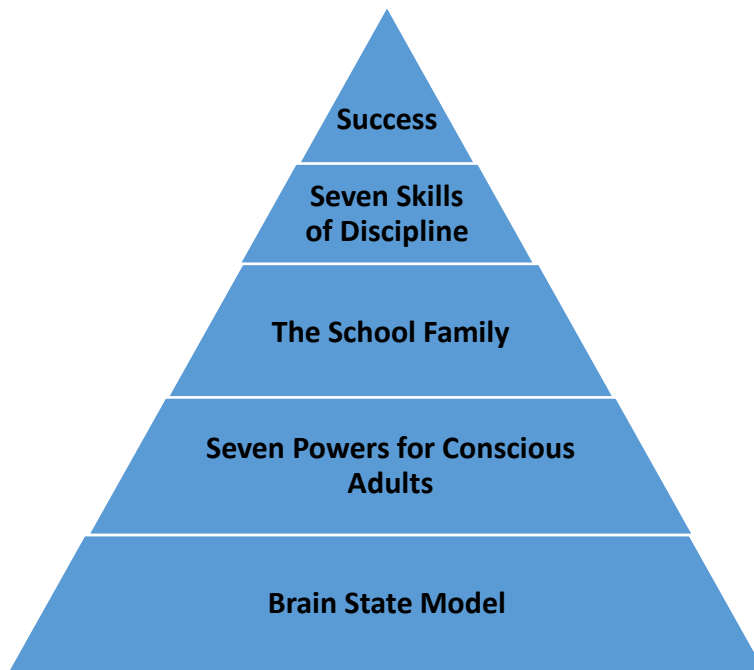
*Figure 22.* Conscious Discipline Transformation Change Process. (Bailey, 2015, p.17)

Methods for instruction include few structured lesson plans. For this curriculum to be effective, it is important that it be utilized "as part of a whole-school behavior management system and is therefore meant to be embedded in classroom and school-wide routines throughout the school day" (Jones et al., 2017, p. 227). Teachers are empowered to integrate these skills and strategies into teachable moments of content from other curricular areas and activities as they choose, rather than into a prescribed isolated lesson. Conscious Discipline has been designed to fit into RtI or MTSS initiatives. It is much more of a holistic approach to SEL as it is based on developing classroom management that will lead to the building of healthy and supportive classroom and school culture.

**Data Analysis by Research Question**

This research was guided by three research questions related to universal SEL curricula and its use with gifted learners. Once gathered, the data was analyzed using the most appropriate process for the type of data and for each research question. The questions led to first combing the literature for a consensus on the social emotional needs of gifted students to create the criteria to be used in evaluating the commercially created universal curricula. Next, interviews were conducted to probe teachers' perceptions related to the use of universal curricula and the gifted students in their classrooms. Finally, after gathering data on the curriculum being used at each sample school site, a rubric was used to compare the curricula's attention to the needs of the social emotional learners. Figure 12 on page 121 illustrates the aspects of data collected for each embedded unit in the case.

**Characteristics of gifted learners' social and emotional needs in universal SEL curricula.** The first research question asked about the social and emotional characteristics of gifted learners found in universal SEL curricula. The researcher combed the literature on gifted children and on the social emotional development of gifted learners to determine criteria for the instrument crafted to analyze and evaluate commercially created universal SEL curricula. *RQ1: What are the characteristics of gifted learners addressed by universal social and emotional learning curricula?* The conceptual framework created to guide this process and to answer the question is found in Figure 12 on page 121.

To create the qualitative analytic rubric, the researcher undertook a process of document review, systematically sifting through various types of resources related to the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted learners. According to Bretschneider et al. (2016), document review is a good strategy for use when it results in insights and information pertaining to a research question, such as RQ1, and when it informs the teaching practice. Further, they state that document review is effective when the goal of the research is to yield evidence-based teaching guidelines for employing best practices building understandings related to "special populations" (p. 5). Guidelines for the search were created through the synthesis of a variety of documents gathered by searching the literature for particular authors and experts in the gifted field.

The researcher employed a multi-step practice in her search for the categories and sub-categories to use in the creation of the Analytic Rubric, with support in the literature related to gifted children's social and emotional development and needs. These steps, found in Figure 21 below, began with making baseline or *a priori* topics from the recommendations of experts in the field of gifted education for developing affective curricula for gifted learners (e.g., Eckert & Robins, 2017; Neihart et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2007; Rogers, 2002; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009). These studies formed the central supports for the rubric creation. Step 2 enlarged the circle of research to include three trustworthy sources: two NAGC Programming Standards, Standard 1: Learning and Development and Standard 4: Learning Environments (Johnsen, 2012); the NAGC Position Statement on Nurturing Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children

(2009); and the state's Department of Education's Social Emotional and Career Guidance for Gifted Students (Chelin, 2015).

The next steps involved the use of the Synthesis Matrix Template, seen in Figure 14 on page 138, as a tool for organizing a document review seeking corroborating evidence from the literature focused on best practices for the development of gifted learners' social and emotional development. Step 3 was to place topics found in the research into the "main idea" column of the template. Then, steps 4-6 involved iterative searches of the literature seeking additional topics and finding sources that supported the topics already identified.

| STEP 1: Analysis of recommendations for the creation of affective curriculum for gifted students from the literature | STEP 2: Baseline topics from the State DEO, NAGC Stds. 1 & 4 (Johnsen, 2012) and Position Paper (NAGC, 2009) | STEP 3: Baseline topics placed in the synthesis matrix template (Figure 15, p. 139) |
|---|---|---|
| STEP 4: Search topics using databases documenting studies & articles in peer reviewed journals with w/ words/phrases document in the synthesis matrix | STEP 5: Use snowballing (Jalai & Wohlin, 2012; Ridley, 2012) from initial studies and articles, identify more sources coraborating topics, add any recurring topics | STEP 6: Continuing the search until there are no other topics related to the social and emotional needs, or social and emotional curriculum for gifted students |
| STEP 7: Determining where topics interrelated with a broader topic, i.e. "self-advocacy, self-efficacy" nesting under "interpersonal communication" | STEP 8: Documenting a variety of expert writings supporting the use of each identified larger category | STEP 9: Share initial rubric with Committee Chair and make changes based on comments. |
| STEP 10: Send rubric to experts for comments and suggestions | STEP 11: Make changes based on experts' responses | STEP 12: Use rubric for evalation of the three curricula from the study samples |

*Figure 21.* Rubric creation process flow chart.

A snowballing technique was repeatedly used by searching for the references found in the newly found sources, reading those articles and studies until eventual saturation was found in areas which had corroborating support. Steps 7 and 8 took place simultaneously (Jalai & Wohlin, 2012; Ridley, 2012). A system of synthesis in categorizing, defining, and combining topics for use in the original rubric format was occurring, as Step 8 involved keeping track of citations related to each of the categories and sub-categories delineated. Sending the draft of the Rubric to the researcher's

committee chair generated some changes to the Rubric. Once approved, it was then sent to several identified experts in the fields of gifted education and psychology for their opinions and feedback. Based on their recommendations, some changes occurred in the Rubric. These are described in the next section. Finally, the Rubric was used in the evaluation of the three curricula explored in this study.

   ***Expert feedback on Rubric.*** During the drafting of the Universal SEL Curricula and Gifted Learners' Needs: An Analytic Rubric (2017), the researcher created a pool of seven potential reviewers, each an expert in the field of gifted education and psychology. Six reviewers, who met the following criteria, were contacted for their opinions and feedback on the topics, research, and structure employed by this instrument (Appendix J). The criteria for choosing these experts was that they: (a) were nationally recognized for work in the gifted field in general and specifically in the social emotional developmental needs of gifted learners, (b) had attained a PhD in either education or psychology, (c) had published in peer-reviewed journals, and (d) had given presentations at NAGC or SENG national conferences. Three experts agreed to provide their professional expertise and insight.

   Initially, the columns on the Rubric were termed "components" and "Look Fors." The researcher renamed these as components and subcomponents to clarify and simplify the Rubric. When the Rubric was sent to these experts, it still had the original headings. The first to reply, currently teaching at a university on the east coast, offered quite a few changes of both the components and "Look Fors," noting that some of the latter should be their own component categories (A. Housand, personal communication, August 6, 2017).

She also suggested a meta-analysis of the validity of empirical studies looking at whether the data relating overexcitabilities to giftedness showed such a relationship (Winkler, 2014). In response to those suggestions, the subcategories in the "Look Fors" were divided into their own categories for evaluative purposes, rather than combined into just one focal point. The researcher dropped some of the generalized subtopics, such as "celebrating diversity," in order to be more explicit in defining that which was to be evaluated. Suggestion of the use of a Likert-like scale was not put into place to avoid the use of this tool in a quantitative fashion, which was not its intended purpose. The purpose of the analytic rubric is to give the evaluators a sense of which areas a curriculum is strongly supporting for gifted social emotional needs and which areas are weak or lacking. In this way, the Rubric gives diagnostic information for each sub-criterion separately (Brookhart, 2012).

The second expert to provide feedback and opinions was one of the two practicing psychologists. Comments on the overall rubric included, "A good rubric with lovely categories supported by literature. Well researched." (S. Chou, personal communication, August 24, 2017). Dr. Chou suggested that the measurements be extended to a 5-point scale with sections for narrative comments next to each. This scale was revised, not to a 5-point one, but to one used by Neihart (2016) in her rubric used for assessing school/district's services to meet social emotional needs of gifted learners (slide #35). One of his suggestions was, "in efforts to reduce the number of components, I wonder if some can be collapsed from many to one" (S. Chou, personal communication, August 24, 2017).

Finally, a psychologist, published author, and renowned national expert in the field of social emotional needs of the gifted gave much advice. One of the suggestions was to pare down the rubric itself to focus on the psychosocial aspects of the curricula to be evaluated. This suggestion led to the compacted final format of the Rubric. Inclusion of information regarding the twice-exceptional (2e) learner's social and emotional needs was another suggestion given by this expert. In this realm, she pointed out that two of the greatest deficits related to their self-esteem are "related to low rates of processing speed" and "working memory" (P. Gatto-Walden, personal communication, October 11, 2017). With limitations in these two areas, gifted 2e learners often experience lack of academic success, even when they are highly gifted. She also related the concomitant relationship between increases in asynchrony coinciding with higher levels of giftedness. Increasing the focus on the inner experiences of highly gifted individuals was an important take-away and understanding from the feedback from this third expert.

Changes and adjustments to the content, verbiage, quantity of components, and citations were made from the earlier draft. This feedback added to the reliability and trustworthiness of the instrument (Meyer & Booker, 2001). Expert reviewers and a deep search of the empirical studies and literature via document review related to the social and emotional needs of gifted students allowed the researcher to determine 11 categories through which curricula can be analyzed in determining its efficacy for use with gifted learners (Appendix K). Each of the following areas are further described using sub-categories to assist those with limited experience in working with gifted students to more easily evaluate their use in any SEL curriculum. The categories are: asynchronous

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development, emotional intelligence, feelings of being different, interpersonal

communication, introspective focus, overexcitabilities, perfectionism,

wellness/mindfulness, risk-taking, talent development, and provisions for referring

students who may need more intense work on their psychosocial needs. The Rubric

allows for evaluators to determine the amount of support for each of these areas in

making recommendations for a universal curriculum's use with gifted students.

**Results and analysis of teacher interview data.** The second research question

sought to explore classroom teachers' lived experiences using commercially created

universal SEL curricula in terms of the curricula's effectiveness for their gifted students.

Interview questions, including a few background questions, were designed with which to

give an opportunity to understand teachers' backgrounds, teaching experience,

experiences with any social emotional curricula, and also describe the curricula they were

currently using (Appendix C).

Teachers' perceptions of the use of universal SEL curricula for meeting the social

and emotional needs of the gifted students in their regular education classrooms were the

focus of the second portion of the interview protocol. These questions were designed to

answer the second research question in this study. *RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions*

*of the efficacy of the universal social emotional learning curricula employed in their*

*classrooms for their gifted and talented students?*

An integral aspect of case study methodology is to gather a wide variety of data

from various sources to not only validate the study, but also to provide insight into the

phenomena being examined. One of the mainstays of data in qualitative case study

involves interviewing those who have lived experiences with the phenomenon being explored (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2003). The researcher chose to use the process of thematic analysis as a strategy for locating common themes from the interview transcriptions. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a foundational method for qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible means by which entire sets of data can be identified and analyzed, while also allowing for patterns or themes to be identified, analyzed, and reported (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher followed the six steps or phases Braun and Clarke (2006) identify for effectively using this analytic method. The phases delineated by Braun and Clarke (2006) are: (1) becoming familiar with the data, or transcripts in this case, (2) generating initial codes to organize the information, (3) searching for themes and sub-themes among the codes, (4) reviewing those themes and using them to create a thematic map, (5) defining and naming the identified themes, (6) telling the story of the data in the write-up.

The researcher created semi-structured interview questions such that each teacher's experiences using their universal SEL curriculum and their perception of how their specific curriculum was meeting the social and emotional needs of the gifted students in their heterogeneously grouped class could be identified and discussed. Theoretically rooted deeply in both constructivism and Bandura's SCT, this interview allowed the researcher "to understand the specific contexts in which people live and work (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). As teachers and students collaborate on learning tasks related to SEL, they are constructing meaning together (Palincsar, 2005). The interview questions were intended to explore the teachers' experiences with their respective universal SEL

curriculum in general and the gifted students in their classrooms. This interview process

included probing or follow-up questions as needed for increasing the depth of teachers'

experiences (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Each interview was tape recorded and

professionally transcribed and lasted an average of about 30 minutes. The researcher also

took notes during the interview, collecting points for emphasis, probing questions to ask,

interview observations, and to gather data that could be compared to answer this

question. Without the opportunity to observe the lessons first hand, the narrative would

instead be told through the comments of an experienced teacher. Once the interviews

were transcribed, member checking took place in order to improve the accuracy with

which the interviews were documented (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Descriptive information garnered from the first two background questions of the

teacher interviews are presented in Table 3 above. The third background question asked

the teachers to discuss past experiences they had in teaching an SEL curriculum. This

information allowed the respondents to paint a picture of their background in SEL.

Teacher A, someone who had been teaching for many years, in many different

elementary grade levels, offered her experiences with the curriculum in use at her school.

She had very little previous experience with any SEL curriculum but had used a more

general approach based in Positive Behavioral Interventions, or PBIS. PBIS stems from

the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Its goal is to teach

behaviors to students in a preventative way, rather than to respond to those behaviors

after the fact. This is information given on the NEA website (http://www.nea.org). As

this is not a packaged curriculum, the universal curriculum she was teaching was her first experience with a universal SEL.

She explained her experience with Well-Managed Schools in her classes when she stated, "This is our fourth year we've used in school-wide." The school began with a "big two to three-day training…and they've done a refresher each year." Because of her experience, she said, "I don't follow the complete script anymore, because we've been doing it so long." She described her instruction time by doing "a skill of the week…we teach in our class meeting, or whenever you can fit it in your room." This shows that she indeed fit the criteria for inclusion in the study, and that with her experience, she has used this universal curriculum with four different groups of heterogeneously grouped students. The school-wide structure of the implementation of this intervention begins when, "Our principal talks about [the skill of the week] on Monday, then [s/he] reviews the steps" for using that skill. She also commented that with just a short refresher of the structure of this curriculum, her students, having used it for multiple years, are good at remembering the steps. Other ways that the curriculum is reinforced includes re-teaching for any new students, having the steps posted in the classroom, and with class meeting practice. She explained that her students, "love to practice. They especially like to practice the wrong way. They think that's really funny."

Teacher B had experience using a program that was homegrown by the staff in her building. This curriculum was being used when she began working at her school. Having this experience gave her a lens which allowed her to compare the currently used curriculum with another approach specific to SEL. The Second Step curriculum was the

only formal SEL systemic programming she had experience teaching. In summing up her experience with her curriculum, Teacher B explained that this was really the first year Second Step has been used school-wide, although several grade levels had been using it for two years. Midway through the previous school year, the principal brought a curriculum "for each grade year and kind of previewed it to see what we thought." For the rest of that year, she continued, "We just kind of cherry-picked a little bit. I picked some things I thought were interesting and I wanted to watch the videos," part of the curriculum package. She continued, stating that "It seems more like it's our hour of entertainment a week now as opposed to [SEL lessons]." Positive aspects of the current program included, "It gives the kids a common language, and the whole school ends up having a common language to use so that we're being consistent." Discussing the effectiveness of the former homegrown curriculum, she discussed how she had been able to see that "It was amazing when we used to teach that [other] curriculum because the kids would actually use that language [from the other program]." She also shared that, "I honestly think that the social emotional learning stuff is the most important thing we do in elementary school."

Teacher C's previous experiences with SEL curricula started during the school year examined. The Conscious Discipline curriculum had been used in other grade levels for several years, then, "We went through a process of investigating different curriculums [*sic*] last year and as a staff we chose to continue with Conscious Discipline and apply it school-wide." The systemic implementation of this intervention began "At the beginning of the year, we had a whole school PD thing where we brought in a professional trainer

and we were all taught about it." The follow-up was that "We have monthly professional developments around applying different areas of Conscious Discipline and everything."

*Teacher description of universal SEL curricula.* Question four in the background section asked each teacher to describe the curriculum she was currently using. One respondent was more descriptive than others, but they all were able to give the interviewer a glimpse into their curriculum.

In Sample A, the teacher began her description of the curriculum explaining that there is a script that teachers follow until they become more familiar with it. Pointing to the curriculum book, *Well Managed Schools* (Hensley et al., 2011), she said, "Their goal is to build the positive relationships with the kids." She gave an example of the corrective teaching portion of the program. "'Well, I noticed you're having a really hard time BLANK,' 'a better choice would be BLANK.'" She explained that there is a skill of the week on which the whole school focuses. "Our principal talks about it on Monday, then she reviews the step." Each teacher teaches the skill in his/her own classroom in her class meeting, or whenever it can be fit in during the day. She continues explaining that an example of reviewing the steps would be used when something comes up, such as "'Do you remember how to make an apology? Or, 'do you need help with that?'" When new students enter the school, she teaches them the skills while re-teaching them to her other students. There are also cards that are posted in the classrooms, and her students role-play the procedures every day in which they really enjoy being the ones who do it the "wrong way."

The second sample's interviewee described the Second Step program (Committee for Children, 2014). Teacher B had far less teaching experience, although she came to education as her third career. The description of the current program began with her experiences with a prior program the school had designed for meeting the social and emotional needs of all their students. She also pointed out what she did not like about Second Step. The major component of the curriculum she describes is a series of films in which child actors take on problems, and go to the Second Step solving chart to describe their problem. She explained that she feels "the Second Step videos always resolve so easily," and that her students are often "rolling their eyes, and they're saying this is so not real."

Sample three was a teacher and school that were using the Conscious Discipline (Bailey, 2015) program. Her interview gave the most detailed description of the curriculum out of all three participants. She began with, "Conscious Discipline is teaching students to identify what brain state they're in, so that they can calm themselves, self-regulate, and return to academic readiness and to be in the executive brain state." Further explanation includes the three brain states at the core of this program: the red or survival state, the blue or emotional state, and the green or executive state. One aspect of the program is that "students learn breathing techniques" which are part of the "Brain Smart Start, which means beginning the day in a certain way so that they feel there's a community, that there's unity, and that we're all on the same page." From there, she explains that,

"They're calm and ready to begin to learn, and so that if they find themselves falling out of that state of readiness, they have strategies to return to that state. Whether it's breathing, or needing to get up to walk, or movement. Something that they have figured out works for them…to get them back to executive readiness."

She concludes by explaining that there are eight different skills involved in academic readiness from which students chose a daily goal to start their day and evaluate their progress on that goal at the end of the day.

**Emergent Themes from Teacher Interviews**

The three teacher participants in this study were asked a series of prepared, prompting, and follow-up questions in semi-structured interviews (Appendix F). After the Background Questions, the following prepared questions were used to explore the teachers' perceptions of the use of the universal SEL curriculum each used. The questions were:

1. Please tell me about what you consider the overall strengths of the curriculum you are using?

2. What changes or suggestions would you recommend making to the curriculum you are using more efficacious overall?

3. In what ways do you think it provides challenges for your gifted students?

4. How is it effective with your gifted students?

5. What would you change about this curriculum to make it more supportive of your gifted students' social and emotional development?

6. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your gifted students OR the curriculum?

During and following each interview, the researcher took field and post-interview notes. According to Merriam (1998), "Post-interview notes allow the investigator to monitor the process of data collection as well as begin to analyze the information itself" (p. 88). The answers to these questions were recorded and verbatim transcripts were done professionally. The researcher checked the accuracy of these transcripts by re-listening to the interviews several times each and checking the precision of the transcription.

Through the process of analyzing the transcripts, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis, three major and two sub-themes arose across the samples. Braun and Clarke (2006) acknowledged that "Thematic analysis involves the searching across of data sets – be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or range of texts – to find repeated patterns of meanings" (p. 86). Each theme provided a framework from which to see what these teachers and their classrooms had in common with each other, and what was different, based on the SEL curriculum being used. These themes are illustrated by representative quotes from the transcripts as seen in Appendix Q.

**Theme 1 - Teachers' perceptions of gifted students' social emotional needs varied.** There were insights into each teachers' perspectives and knowledge surrounding the nature and needs of her gifted learners. Many examples from the transcripts included the use of the terminology found in the Universal SEL Curriculum and the Gifted Learner Rubric. These insights allowed the researcher to extrapolate each teacher's understanding of the social and emotional needs of their gifted students and their ability to judge the efficacy of the curriculum they were using.

Instances of these perceptions were found in the following examples from the interview transcripts. Teacher A noted that, "One of them [gifted student] doesn't need anything, honestly." Yet, of another gifted student she shares that, "The other one needs a lot. He will cry if he's wrong…[he] thinks he's right all the time and sometimes he's not and that's really, really hard for him." These comments, from opposite ends of the spectrum, confirm that there are perceptions that gifted learners do not have any distinctive social and emotional needs (Peterson, 2009). Later in the interview, though, she acknowledged that, "They [gifted] need to process in a different way." She also said, "I think that, you know, gifted kids' brains work on a little bit different level. I think making mistakes, for kids that are struggling with behavior, is a lot harder for them to cope with and that's why we often see a little bit different behavior problems [*sic*] with them…" This shows that she sees that the curriculum in use, Well-Managed Schools, does not align with the differences between her gifted students and her typical ones.

Teacher B stated that, "I'm one of those people who really believes the best way to support them – kids like that - [gifted students] is in the classroom." She continued to explain, "That's really what drives all of the differentiation I do." When discussing the Second Step curriculum she said, "The kinds of struggles that most of my gifted kids have aren't even a part of the curriculum." Regarding the Conscious Discipline curriculum, Teacher C noted that she thought some of her gifted students "Become hyper-vigilant or just hyper-sensitive to [the curriculum]." As part of this curriculum requires students to self-select goals for their emotions and self-control, she saw that, "For a couple of those students who were very goal oriented, if they didn't meet their

goal, and they knew that they weren't quite there yet, they were more critical of themselves than perhaps other students would be." Teachers B and C also show in these answers that they see deficits in their curriculum in regard to their gifted students.

These responses cover the spectrum of teacher beliefs related to gifted learners' social and emotional developmental needs. From the notion that they shouldn't need any support, to not understanding when a student is over-emotional, to being able to meet those needs in the classroom, to understanding that perhaps the universal curriculum is not meeting their needs. Each of these examples of the first theme show the levels of knowledge teachers have related to gifted learners' affective needs.

**Theme 2 - School-wide decisions affected the impact of the curriculum.** The schools' processes for choosing school-wide SEL curriculum impacted the lived experiences of the teachers' use and attitude towards the curricula they used and its efficacy. The two sub-themes are described by the interview responses related to the *curriculum selection process* and the *staff training provided* at each site.

The selection of a curriculum for systemic use in these schools also shows a variety of approaches. In School A, the curriculum was chosen "so I think that the idea was if we implemented it school-wide then you're cutting down on the behavior problems." In School B, it can be inferred from the interview that the curriculum was chosen when, "The principal got one for each grade year and [we] kind of preview[ed] it to see what we thought." School C showed that teachers as stakeholders were involved in the decision: "We went through a process of investigating different curriculums last year, and as a staff we chose to continue with Conscious Discipline and apply it school-wide."

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According to the CASEL Guide (2013) and to Durlak et al. (2011), in order for SEL curricula to be effective, readiness, planning, and implementation should include members of each staff and community stakeholder groups.

Regarding training, another important aspect of any effective SEL curriculum's use (CASEL Guide, 2013, Durlak et al., 2011), teacher training is another important component for implementation. Teacher A commented that, "We've done the Well-Managed Schools training – This is our fourth year that we've used it school-wide." She also commented that there has been a refresher for teachers each subsequent year. Teacher B, when asked about training said, "We didn't have one. We just get this big manual." Teacher C remarked that, "This year at the beginning of the year, we had a whole school professional development thing where we brought a professional trainer and we were taught all about it. Now throughout the year, we have monthly professional developments around applying different areas of Conscious Discipline everything." These findings show three very different systems of implementing SEL curriculum in general.

**Theme 3 – Teachers delineated curricula strengths and weaknesses, and gave appropriate suggestions for improvement.** During the interviews, each teacher's response to questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 created this theme. Teachers' perceptions of their curricula's ability to meet the needs of their gifted learners were shown via the answers to these questions. A curriculum's flexibility in terms of differentiation for gifted students' needs was one important take-away from this theme.

In terms of the efficacy of each of the curriculum, teacher comments were very telling when asked about strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement in their current curriculum. Teacher A commented, "I think for them [gifted] it needs to be just a little bit deeper." She also stated, "I think for them [gifted] it just needs to be more direct. If they have those social-emotional needs, they're not going to want to listen to you giving them corrective teaching." Teacher B said, "I think that [the current curriculum] would be really cool is if it was little bit more modular...If it was more modular, then you could have this palette of things to choose from. It would be like differentiating, right?" When asked about changes, Teacher C stated that gifted learners should be given "the same accommodations that they get for other tasks, although it's not necessarily built in, so you have to kind of create that part of the normal accommodations you'd make for those students anyway."

Based on these interview results, it appears that Schools A and B both had the curriculum chosen for them by the building leadership, and only School C had input from the staff on what type of SEL curriculum to choose. However, considerations about which curriculum might offer the most support for gifted learners was not considered in any of the three sample schools. In addition to this omission, an informal assessment of the position of TEAs, those who are responsible for the gifted students' ALPs, has shown that those are not teaching positions, and they have very limited hours which vary by school. Consequently, the classroom teachers in this district are responsible for any programming their gifted students receive, which would include their state mandated social emotional ALP goals. The only SEL curriculum in each of these sample schools

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are the ones that were investigated in this study, none of which were designed with gifted

learners' needs in mind.

**Use of the Rubric: Universal SEL Curriculum and the Gifted Learner**

To answer the third research question, the researcher utilized the Rubric included

below which was created via the literature review, document review, and the answers to

Research Question 1 on the characteristics of social and emotional developmental needs

for gifted learners found in universal SEL curricula. *RQ3: How does utilization of*

*universal social emotional learning curricula address the social and emotional needs of*

*gifted students?* The SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017) can be found in Figure 23

below and in Appendix K.

As shown in Table 7, each of the curriculum evaluated in this study came with a

plethora of related, mostly online, resources. The researcher focused the curriculum

evaluation on the foundational resources of each. Blank versions of the SELECTED

Rubric™ (Turner, 2017) were copied for each of the curricula. To utilize the Rubric, it

was important to design a strategy for comparing categories with varied numbers of

subcategories. Although numbers were used to compare the results of the evaluations,

these were not translated to quantitative measures, but rather used to compare each

curriculum's strengths and weaknesses in each category. Wiggins (1998) discusses the

use of rubrics as a judgement of quality, used for scoring that relies on criterion-

referenced perspectives. Duckworth and Yeager (2015) explain that measures of social

and emotional skills have limitations and advantages. They further state that, "Design

features that make a measurement approach helpful for one use may render it less

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appropriate for another" (p. 245). Their recommendations discourage any type of

hierarchy in ranking measures of different categories in any type of absolute way. The

results for each of the curriculum are found in Appendices R, S, and T. For each

category, the total number of points accrued were divided by the total number possible,

giving a means by which the curricula could be compared.

Table 7

*SEL Curricula Resources*

| Curriculum | Foundational Resource | Online Resource |
|---|---|---|
| Well-Managed Schools | *Well Managed Schools* (Hensley et al., 2011, 2016)<br><br>Book: Boys Town Press | Website, research, testimonials, videos for students and for training, blog, articles, lesson plans & assignments, Boys Town Press catalog, Social Media |
| Second Step | *Second Step: Early Learning Through Grade 8: Skills for Social and Academic Success.*<br><br>(Committee for Children, 2014) http://www.cfchildren.org/Second-Step | Kits purchased online with a classroom or site license, online portal<br><br>Training modules w/ certificate of completion, Kits individual or bundled include 22 lessons (see above), Demonstration videos, |
| Conscious Discipline | *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms*<br><br>(Bailey, 2015)<br><br>Book: Loving Guidance | Book portal, video gallery, articles, podcasts, webinars, success stories, instructor articles, product demonstrations, CD games, make 'n takes, We Care Cards, audio series, bonus content, Premium Toolkit $49/yr. |

*SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017)*

| Category | Sub-Category | Not Mentioned (0) | Little Mention (1) | Well-Covered (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Asynchronous Development** | **Mention of, or appreciation for an uneven rate of development in cognitive, affective and physical domains** | | | | |
| | **Focus on teaching the whole child** – "mind, heart, spirit, social aspects" (Gatto-Walden, 2016, p. 23) | | | | |
| **Emotional Intelligence** | **Identification of emotions in others** | | | | |
| | **Accurate expression of emotions and needs associated with those** | | | | |
| | **Provides a distinction between the difference between accurate and honest emotions** | | | | |
| | **Focus on intrinsic motivation** | | | | |
| | **Lessons include learning about empathy** | | | | |
| **Feelings of Being Different Addressed** | **Offer a variety of grouping strategies** | | | | |
| | **Provide a variety of opportunities for social interaction** | | | | |
| | **"Unique" or atypical characteristics mentioned and supported** | | | | |
| | **Create safe spaces for all types of students** | | | | |
| | **Give opportunities for creating a variety of adult support systems** | | | | |

| Category | Sub-Category | Not Mentioned (0) | Little Mention (1) | Well-Covered (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Interpersonal Communication** | **Strategies for communication with peers** | | | | |
| | **Communication with parents & family relationships** | | | | |
| | **Strategies for emphasizing self-advocacy, self-efficacy and conflict management** | | | | |
| | **Strategies to assist in appreciation of gender differences** | | | | |
| **Introspective Focus Self-Actualization Development of positive intrapersonal skills** | **Self-assessment** | | | | |
| | **Self-esteem** | | | | |
| | **Self-regulation** | | | | |
| | **Aspects for self-knowledge related to identity** | | | | |
| | **Self-knowledge regarding interests related to student strengths** | | | | |
| | **Opportunities given to identify self-beliefs and moral reasoning** | | | | |
| **Overexcitabilities** | **Heightened intellectual intensity** – intensity and accelerated mental activity, questioning, seeking answers | | | | |
| | **Emotional intensity** – extremes of feeling, inhibition, affective memory, anxieties, fear, guilt, depression | | | | |
| | **Psychomotor Intensity** – heightened physical response to stimuli, confident and aware of bodily movement | | | | |
| | **Heightened response to sensory input** – intense reactions to sights, sounds, tastes, textures, smells, etc. | | | | |
| | **Imaginational Intensity** – vivid imagination, interest in creative endeavors (i.e. fantasy, metaphors, storytelling, science fiction) | | | | |

| Category | Sub-Category | Not Mentioned (0) | Little Mention (1) | Well-Covered (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Perfectionism** <br> **A distinction is made between striving for excellence, versus seeking perfection.** | Addressing negative issues such as fear of failure | | | | |
| | Promoting/supporting making mistakes | | | | |
| | Ensuring challenge for all | | | | |
| | Positive self-talk | | | | |
| **Wellness/Mindfulness Stress Management** <br> **Lessons on stress reduction, wellness and mindfulness strategies are included in the curriculum. These may include:** | Being conscious and aware of the present moment | | | | |
| | Using breathing and focus to encourage calmness in feelings, thoughts & physical sensations. | | | | |
| | Strategies for coping with stress | | | | |
| | A regular systematic course of mindfulness activities | | | | |
| **Risk-taking** <br> **Lessons are framed to encourage students to be willing to make mistakes.** | Growth mindset focus (Dweck, 2006) | | | | |
| | Acceptance and learning opportunities from social mistakes | | | | |
| | Acceptance and learning opportunities from academic mistakes | | | | |
| | Provides physical and emotional space for students to work | | | | |
| | Gives opportunity for choice in activities, process and products | | | | |
| | Provides support for taking chances academically, socially and emotionally | | | | |

| Category | Sub-Category | Not Mentioned (0) | Little Mention (1) | Well-Covered (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Talent Development**<br>**Topics of academic and career planning are included** | **Activities involve leadership opportunities** | | | | |
| | **Career opportunities are included in lesson activities** | | | | |
| | **College and career choices are discussed** | | | | |
| | **Opportunities for guest speakers and expert opinions (i.e. TED Talks, community involvement)** | | | | |
| **Counseling Referral Guidelines**<br>**Curriculum gives information to instructors about when issues surfacing during lessons should be referred to counseling.** | **Referral suggestions include school counseling services** | | | | |
| | **Referral suggestions include private counseling services** | | | | |
| | **Counseling options discussed are specific to gifted** | | | | |
| | **Suggestions are made for preventative counseling** | | | | |
| | **Group and one-to-one counseling options are suggested** | | | | |
| | **Professional testing for determination of learning disabilities or gifted identification are mentioned** | | | | |
| | **Referral suggestions include school counseling services** | | | | |
| | **Holistic Score: Total the number of checks in each category – mode of checklist items (Muskal & Laydens, 2000)** | | | | |

**General Comments:**

**Strength Areas:**

**Weak Areas:**

*Figure 23.* SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017)

***Well-Managed Schools.*** In analyzing the Boys Town SEL curriculum, Well-Managed Schools, it was clear that the prime focus of this program was for teachers and other staff to build relationships with students to teach and manage their behaviors to reduce the number of ODRs. A detailed description of the program and the available resources are found in the descriptive section above. The BTEM was designed for four very specific purposes: (1) building relationships with all students, (2) encouraging a sense of connectedness to school, (3) establishing a safe, positive climate for learning, and (4) empowering every child with the social skills needed to enjoy academic and personal success. While admirable goals, there really isn't much in this program for specific social emotional development of gifted learners, nor opportunities for differentiation. Part of the basis for the BTEM is on establishing clear, consistent expectations and very specific positive or negative consequences no matter who the students are or what their learning needs may be. This type of program is not designed for differentiation.

The Rubric was used in the analysis of the foundational resource, the book *Well-Managed Schools, 2nd Edition* (Hensley et al., 2016). Additional resources from the program's online resources were also perused. A summary of this analysis is shown in Appendix R. The only categories that were supported by the curriculum overview were those related to the categories and subsequent sub-categories of Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Communication, and one lone point in the Introspective Focus category. Figure 24 provides links where the researcher randomly chose lessons, blog entries, articles and looked at available books suggested as supplements for the curriculum.

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| Resource Evaluated | Link |
|---|---|
| Foundational Resource Book | Hensley et al., 2016 |
| Well-Managed Schools Participant Workbook | (2012). Boys Town, NE: Boys Town. |
| Social Skills Videos | http://www.boystowntraining.org/social-skills-videos.html |
| Lesson: Making an Apology: Elementary Students | http://www.boystowntraining.org/assets/makinganapology elementary.pdf |
| Lesson: Disagreeing Appropriately | http://www.boystowntraining.org/assets/lp_disagreeingappropriately elementary.pdf |
| Lesson: Following Instructions and Listening | http://www.boystowntraining.org/assets/listeninglesson planelementary.pdf |
| Activity: Solving Problems using SODAS | http://www.boystowntraining.org/assets/sodatechniques.pdf |
| Articles of Interest | http://www.boystowntraining.org/articles-of-interest.html |
| Boys Town Press | https://www.boystownpress.org/ |
| Webinars | http://www.boystowntraining.org/webinars.html |

*Figure 24*. Well-Managed Schools Supplemental Resources analyzed using the Rubric

In the foundational resource book, one of the prominent theoretical bases for Well-Managed Schools is "behavior shaping." Many of the activities and processes focus on guiding children towards desired behaviors. This goal leaves little to no room for supporting asynchronous development or any appreciation of uneven rates of development in gifted children, when the goal is to shape student behavior to a pre-determined norm. Although some of the categories and sub-categories are addressed, such as teaching empathy and following the five competencies outlined by CASEL, there are other aspects of the program that are not supportive of social emotional development for gifted learners. Studies used to support this program include those that support the

premise that "social deficiencies, if not improved or corrected, can haunt children long after they leave the classroom" (Hensley et al., 2016, p.103). The question becomes, who decides what deficiencies are? And what are overexcitabilities, perfectionism, or uneven rates of development? This also does not leave room for addressing the category of Feelings of Being Different, or many of the sub-categories as part of this component. Well-Managed Schools' activities and lesson plans do not provide the flexibility for supporting unique social and emotional developmental needs of gifted learners.

The 16 social skills at the heart of this curriculum (Appendix P) are very explicit, with very little room for individualization. According to the resource book, *Well-Managed Schools, 2nd Edition* (Hensley et al., 2016), their guidance for teaching interpersonal interactions do not include the elements of self-advocacy, self-efficacy, or conflict management. An example of the specific and observable steps is seen in one of the skills – Staying on Task:

1. Look at your task or assignment.

2. Think about the steps needed to complete the task.

3. Focus all of your attention on the task.

4. Stop working only when instructed.

5. Ignore distractions and interruptions from others. (p. 111-12)

Very little of the premise or of teaching procedures such as this one or the other 15 supports the components from the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017).

***Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success:*** Several different

resources were helpful in analyzing and evaluating this curriculum. Besides the website,

the researcher had access to the online information for the entire elementary program,

including the Scope and Sequence for grades K – 5 (Committee for Children, 2014). The

research done by Jones et al. (2017) also provided a program analysis of each unit in the

Grade 1 – Grade 5 program in five domains: (1) cognitive, (2) emotional, (3)

intrapersonal, (4) character, and (5) mindset. From analysis of the content through these

five lenses, they determined the percentage of program activities targeting each domain:

- Cognitive Regulation – 40%

- Emotional Processes – 52%

- Interpersonal Skills – 49%

- Character – 7%

- Mindset – 1% (Jones et al., 2017, p. 163)

In their analysis of the developmental appropriateness of content they also found that

there was a greater emphasis on cognitive regulation in grades 1-3, with grades 4 and 5

showing more focus on emotional and interpersonal skills.

Utilizing the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017) and the elementary grades

Scope and Sequence (Committee for Children, 2011) led to the completed Rubric found

in Appendix S. In calculating the total number of points for each category and dividing

by the total number possible for that category, none of the subcategories earned even

50% of the points possible. The strongest areas of support in the Second Step curriculum

were the Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Communications categories, with no

support for gifted students' needs found in Asynchronous Development, Talent

Development and Counseling Referral Guidelines. Finally, there was negligible mention

of Risk-Taking and Perfectionism.

In addition to the findings described in the descriptive data above, lessons and

other aspects of the curriculum were analyzed to help answer RQ3. Through district login

information, the researcher analyzed the online training modules for grades K-5. All of

the materials for grade 3 including (1) Scope and Sequence of Lessons, (2) Lesson

Features, (3) Management Strategies, (4) Teaching Strategies, (5) Teaching Belly

Breathing, (6) Brain Builder Overview, and (7) Student Knowledge Assessments, were

perused once logged in to the Second Step website (http://www.secondstep.org). The

grade level webpages also include Daily Practice Activities, Reinforcement Skills

including the Following Through Cards, and resources for use with counselor support and

for parent and family engagement.

In the Grade 3 Scope and Sequence, 22 weekly lessons are outlined. Each week

students have a different topic within the four learning units: (1) Skills for Learning, (2)

Empathy, (3) Emotion Management, and (4) Problem Solving. An example would be the

Planning to Learn lesson as part of Unit 1. See Appendix U for an example of the lyrics

for one of the songs that plays prominently in each lesson. Figure 25 shows an example

of one of the Lesson Cards.

Use of the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017) showed that, as in Well-

Managed Schools, there was no evidence of support for asynchronous development. For

the category of "feelings of being different," there were sections of the curriculum where

a variety of social interactions could occur, including the Brain Builders and the opportunity for singing with classmates. Positive self-talk was mentioned, but no other sub-categories related to perfectionism were found. No evidence was found for any of the categories or sub-categories having extensive coverage in Second Step materials.
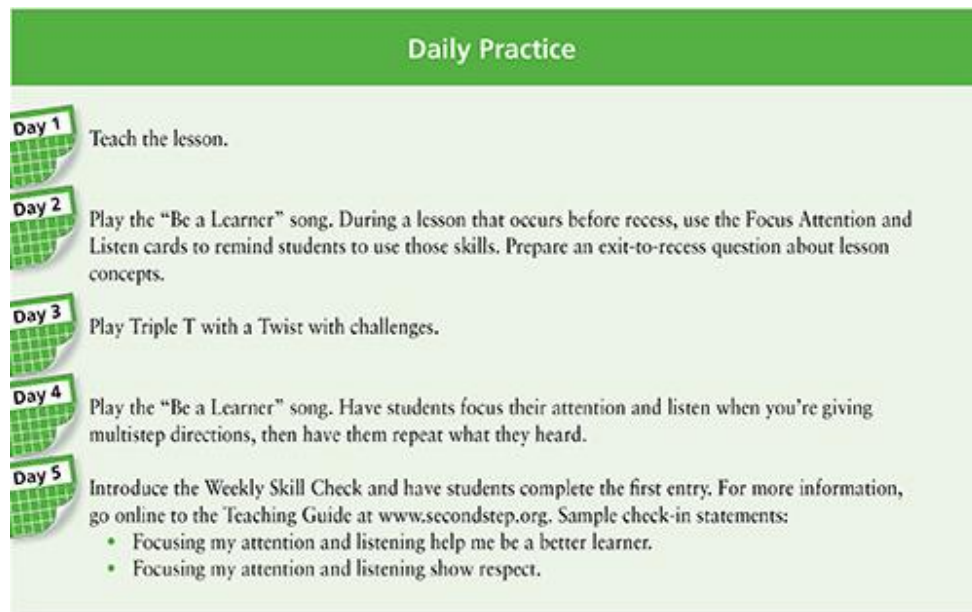


*Figure 25.* Second Step Weekly Lesson Card. (Committee for Children, 2014)

**Conscious Discipline.** The analysis of the Conscious Discipline curriculum was very different than that of the other two curricula. Since this program is designed to be a comprehensive emotional intelligence classroom management system, its focus begins with modifying teacher behaviors and then moves on to guide changes in student behavior. The classroom community model is at the heart of this curriculum. There are no specific daily lessons or units. The heart of this program lies in teachers becoming "conscious of the culture and the behavioral patterns that are aiding or impeding learning in [their] schools" (Bailey, 2015, p. 8). It "is designed to teach effective social-emotional

skills and embed resiliency into the school culture as a way to counteract the stress and trauma that are so prevalent in our society" (p. 9). The chapters in the book are designed not with units and lessons to teach, but with sections each supporting a developmental need which focuses on safety, connection, and problem-solving. Bailey (2015) explains that this program is based on transformational changes, asking teachers and staff members to change their mind and skill sets. Teachers are encouraged to implement only one skill chapter per month after reading the first three chapters which form the basis for the whole curriculum. That way, teachers have a full 21 days during which to learn each section and create or change a habit before moving to the next topic. Rather than lessons, teachers are asked to "reflect and implement routines, rituals and classroom structures that support the skill and power in each chapter" (p. 25). Free online sources are available for teachers in the form of a book study portal as well as QR codes taking them to additional information, also to complement the sections of the book.

As in the analysis of the Second Step curriculum, Jones et al. (2017) analyzed the Conscious Discipline SEL curriculum. Program materials include many different books geared towards adults to teach teachers how to internalize and model the skills that students will be developing. The main book, *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms* (Bailey, 2015) was analyzed with the Rubric. The evaluation by Jones et al. evaluated the overall program that is geared towards ages 0-12, and the specific primary program, Feeling Buddies, aimed at Pre-K – Grade 2. Their analysis showed the skill focus for each of the five domains seen in the Second Step analysis and determined the percentage of program activities targeting each domain:

- Cognitive Regulation – 14%

- Emotional Processes – 75%

- Interpersonal Skills – 54%

- Character – 4%

- Mindset – 7% (Jones et al., 2017, p. 221)

Evaluating the premises and suggested activities in the foundational text using the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017) showed much higher instances of each of the criteria and sub-criteria than the other two curricula. The completed Rubric is found in Appendix T. Although there is no specific discussion directly related to gifted learners in the materials, there are many aspects of this curriculum which would benefit the social and emotional development of gifted students. The strength areas of this curriculum, as shown in the Rubric, are in the categories of Emotional Intelligence, Asynchronous Development, Perfectionism, and Wellness/Mindfulness. The only weak areas were Talent Development and Overexcitabilities.

The steps illustrated in the transformation change process triangle, seen in Figure 21, shows that there are many aspects of the categories and sub-categories supported by this unique SEL program. The base of the pyramid, the Brain State Model with its neurological bases, supports the idea that understanding internal states of brain development comes before addressing student behavior. This would provide support for asynchronous development, emotional intelligence, feelings of being different, perfectionism, and even some support for areas of overexcitabilities, particularly emotional intensities. The "Seven Powers for Conscious Adults" section helps teachers

learn how to model self-actualization strategies. The School Family focuses on connections and cooperation which support the developmental growth of interpersonal communication. In the Problem-Solving section, with the Seven Skills of Discipline, wellness and mindfulness as well as risk-taking are supported as children learn to "manage themselves, resolve conflict and develop pro-social behaviors" (Bailey, 2015, p. 17). Many categories and sub-categories of gifted learners' needs, as represented by the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017) are supported by the various aspects of the Conscious Discipline program.

Table 8 gives an overview from Appendices R, S, and T for each of the major categories from the Rubric and an overview of how each curriculum was evaluated through its use for evaluating the focus on each aspect related to the social emotional developmental support for gifted learners.

Table 8

*Overall Comparison of the Curricula Based on the Rubric Analysis*

| Component | Pts. Poss. | Well-Managed Schools | Second Step | Conscious Discipline |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asynchronous Devel. | 6 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Emotional Intelligence | 15 | 3 | 7 | 14 |
| Feelings of Being Different | 15 | 0 | 2 | 10 |
| Interpersonal Comm. | 12 | 3 | 4 | 9 |
| Introspective/Intrapersonal | 18 | 1 | 4 | 14 |
| Overexcitabilities | 15 | 0 | 3 | 4 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perfectionism | 12 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Wellness/Mindfulness | 12 | 1 | 3 | 11 |
| Risk-Taking | 18 | 0 | 1 | 14 |
| Talent Development | 12 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Counseling Referral | 18 | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| Totals | 153 | 9 | 16 | 117 |

**Additional Emergent Themes**

The triangulation of the data collected from the document analysis leading to the descriptive analysis of the case and the samples, the semi-structured interview responses, and the evaluation of the curricula provided the researcher with intersections of ideas, findings, and themes (Yin, 2012, 2003). As the data were analyzed, three major themes emerged from the findings: (1) the unique social and emotional needs of gifted learners, (2) the limitations of universal SEL curricula for gifted learners, and (3) lack of teacher knowledge regarding gifted learners.

**Theme 4: The unique social emotional needs of gifted learners**. In addition to the three themes detailed above, from the teacher interviews additional support for this theme comes from the descriptive data for the school district at the heart of this case study. Initial analysis of the descriptive data for the case began with the state's UIP goals for The District. Supporting this first theme, the goals specified that The District needed to improve its processes for systematically and periodically reviewing student progress and identification of individual students' specific needs. Although not mentioning gifted

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students specifically, this would be a group of students who have specific needs and would fall under the auspices of the state in terms of supporting and requiring differentiation for those needs. With 15% of The District's students being identified as talented and gifted, The District's guiding documents contained inferences to their needs. The mission and vision statements stated that "each child brings…a unique contribution," "our children's greatest abilities," "challenging all children," and "unique learning needs." Interviews with the two district administrators showed an acknowledgement that social emotional and academic support both are needed for gifted learners. They also both discussed the purpose for the TEA position's contributions for that support. The Gifted specialist discussed the state mandate for each gifted student's ALP to contain an affective goal. Analysis of data from each of the samples included additional support for this theme. Although, again, not mentioning gifted learners specifically, the document review associated with schools A, B, and C each mention supports for their talented and gifted learners in addition to their focus on supporting the social and emotional needs of all learners.

**Theme 5: The limitations of universal SEL curricula for gifted learners.** The results of the data analysis pertaining to the use of universal SEL curricula show that there is not enough substantive support for such use. Qualitative content analysis allowed for the reduction of data in focusing on just those aspects which related to the synthesis of information in the literature about affective curricula for gifted learners (Schreier, 2013). The categories supported by the analysis of content related to the unique social and emotional developmental needs of gifted children emerged through the processes of

qualitative content analysis and thematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Schreier, 2013).

In answering the first research question, through the creation of the Rubric, discrete categories not found in either the literature for the needs of typical learners, nor in the overlap between their needs and those affective needs of gifted learners emerged (see Figure 12, p. 121). In this case, the information about the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted learners comes from looking at the differences rather than the similarities of these needs. These categories are found in the first column of the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017). Sub-categories giving specific examples of topics to search for are found in the second column. In the second research question, and in Theme 3 emerging from the teacher interviews, teachers spoke about weaknesses and ideas for changing the curriculum they were using. This data supports the limitations of the currently used curricula for supporting gifted students. As chronicled above, Teacher A responded with ideas for making her curriculum deeper and more directed towards her gifted students' "specific needs." Teacher B and C discussed differentiating and creating accommodations in their curricula to better meet the needs of their gifted students.

The data analysis from the use of the Rubric provided the starkest portrayal of the limitations of the curricula for gifted learners' developmental needs. Table 8, above, gives numerical data for comparison purposes, although the Rubric was not created as a quantitative tool. Looking holistically at the totals of examples for each of the categories and sub-categories, clearly both the Well-Managed Classrooms and Second Step curricula fall well-short of supporting gifted students' affective needs. Well-Managed

Classrooms' learning materials showed no support for any of the categories except for some support related to Interpersonal skills and Emotional Intelligence skills (Appendix Q). Second Step's curriculum components also only showed some support for the same two categories (Appendix R). Conscious Discipline showed more potential for being an effective support for gifted students, possibly needing fewer modifications than the other two programs in this study; however, it was lacking in the categories of Talent Development and supporting students related to Overexcitabilities (Appendix S). This data supports the theme that there are considerable limitations in universal SEL curricula for supporting the needs of gifted learners. None of the universal SEL curricula explored in this study completely support the gifted students' social and emotional developmental needs.

Also related to RQ3, in the CASEL SEL Readiness and Engagement Analysis done for The District (Appendix O), there was no specific mention of SEL for gifted students. Only the mention of the MTSS framework might overtly connect to the needs of gifted learners. A lack of any documentation at the district level explicitly related to programming for their TAG population either academically or affectively, occurred during this study. The TAG web page was the only place where information could be found. There was also a policy document entitled "Promotion, Retention and Acceleration" and a webpage with information on Early Access found on the district site. A brand-new TAG website did go online in the late fall of the 2017-2018 school year. On this new site it says that one of the goals of this department is "Supporting gifted learners throughout the district with a combination of social and emotional support, as well as

providing differentiated instruction on a daily basis within the classroom setting"

(sites.google.com/bvsd.org/tag/, Home page). No specifics were given as to how this goal

will be reached. Clearly, programming changes were ongoing at the time of this study.

**Theme 6: Lack of teacher knowledge regarding gifted learners.** As seen in

The District and school descriptions, none of the teachers in this study have shown any

training experience or expertise in working with gifted students, their academic needs, or

their social and emotional needs. The District's job description for the TEAs indicates

that neither a teaching license nor an endorsement or course hours in gifted education are

required for those positions. An informal assessment of the staff in these positions shows

that there are highly qualified personnel working with gifted students, but that is not a

requirement of The District, nor are salaries commensurate with this type of experience

or educational credentials. The only systemic programming for gifted students in The

District is full-day inclusion in regular education classrooms. Many teachers offer

differentiation and The District's teacher evaluation tool contains several categories for

documenting these strategies. Yet no formal documentation could be found in which this

is either required or supported across The District by means of coaching or required PD.

Although the state and The District require an affective goal on each ALP, no

information was found related to how these goals would be supported or met by school

staff.

Through the interview process, teachers did share that they had knowledge of

differing academic and social emotional needs of their gifted learners, but there was a

continuum of how that looked in the three classes studied. One teacher felt that successful

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gifted learners didn't need SEL support, while the other two saw differentiation and accommodations of their curriculum as a way to meet those needs.

Document analysis at neither the district nor school levels showed evidence of systemic support available for classroom teachers in their knowledge level related to giftedness. The data on the choice of SEL curricula from the interview transcripts showed no evidence of considerations for gifted students' needs as any part of the decision. In two schools, the decision was made at the principal level; and in the third, although a group of teachers was included in the choice process, no mention of gifted students was made in the teacher's recount of this choice process. Although there were no questions related to twice exceptional students, only one teacher mentioned that term during the interview. This may have been another indication of the lack of knowledge, but it also was never discussed explicitly.

After gathering data from a real-life case, the researcher provided a rich and thick description of the case and its embedded units or sub-cases. The data analysis led to six key themes, "not for generalizing beyond the case, but for understanding the complexity of the case" (Cresswell, 2016, p. 101). These themes will form the basis of the assertions, implications, and recommendations in Chapter 5.

**Chapter Summary**

In Chapter Four the introduction for the research and its design were restated. Data from all three areas of this study - the data about the social and emotional needs of gifted learners, the school district or case, and specifics from each of the schools used as sub-cases or samples - were used to develop a case description. This descriptive

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framework, according to Yin (1994), is one of the general analytic strategies for use in creating an "analysis organized based on descriptions of the general characteristics and relations of the phenomenon in question" (p. 5). The descriptive data presented in this chapter served to place this study in context.

In the first part of the descriptive data, expert opinion suggested changes to the rubric created for analysis were highlighted. Next, the descriptive data was used to recreate the case for the readers of this study. The District was described, as was the phenomenon. Sub-cases were described next, as each sample school's descriptive data was also chronicled. In qualitative research, participants' perceptions of the phenomenon at the heart of the case - the use of universal SEL curricula for meeting the social emotional developmental needs of gifted students - were quoted and analyzed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This allowed the researcher to view the reality at the heart of this research, building confidence in the accuracy with which this study is presented to its readers (Yin, 2003, 2007). Finally, the themes that emerged through the analysis of the data collected, were presented.

In the analysis and triangulation of the data collected for this study, six themes emerged. Three of these themes occurred across the three teacher interviews. The researcher was surprised at the depth of the teachers' perceptions of gifted students' specific social and emotional needs. With no district-wide initiatives, trainings, or requirements for coursework on the nature and needs of gifted learners, these teachers showed that they all had at least a basic understanding that universal SEL wouldn't necessarily support gifted students' social and emotional developmental needs. As all

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three of these teachers are also parents, some of this may be due to their children being gifted, whether identified or not. The researcher was also surprised by the intuitive and supportive nature of the teachers' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of their existing curricula. Their responses mirrored the more in-depth curricula analysis and evaluation undertaken with the Rubric created in this study. Some insightful suggestions were given with ways to differentiate, accommodate, or supplement the material for their gifted students.

The school-wide decision-making process for choosing a universal SEL curriculum at each building was not as surprising. This district is known for having few district mandates and for the use of SBM at each school. If The District chooses to act on the recommendations made by CASEL for systemic adoption of SEL curricula, this will be an important consideration and possibly a hurdle to be overcome.

In envisioning this research study, the researcher would have hypothesized that the social and emotional needs for gifted learners would be unique from those of typical students. The data collection and analysis process for this theme, however, produced substantive evidence to support this initial thinking. Beginning with expert suggestions for the development of affective curriculum for gifted learners gave supportive data for this *a priori* thinking (e.g., Eckert & Robins, 2017; Neihart et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2007; Rogers, 2002; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009). From there, a great amount of reading, documentation, snowball reference combing, and searching through previous studies related to this topic provided enough information for the creation of the Rubric which yielded specific data as to why commercially created universal SEL without a

focus on giftedness would not be effective for meeting gifted learners' social and emotional needs.

Finally, Theme 6 on lack of teacher knowledge was not a surprise to the researcher. With many years as a teacher in this district, participating in what seems like a multitude of different initiatives, it was no surprise that none of these curricula had changed the system's approach to meeting the needs of its gifted population. Glimpses of possible support have occurred over the years, but there never appeared to be any type of comprehensive plan put in place for supporting either the academic or affective needs of this group of students. Formerly, a private school for the gifted was operated within The District's boundaries, a charter school for the gifted proposal was voted down, a smaller private school opened, but there has been no evidence-based best practice model for either programming or teacher development to support gifted students in the time the researcher was employed in The District.

Chapter Five will summarize this study. Implications based on these findings will be presented. First, a summary in the form of a descriptive narrative will be presented. Themes and assertions based on those themes will be offered next. Then, limitations of the study design and findings will be discussed. Implications for policy, practice, and research will follow. Finally, recommendations for policies which will lead to meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted students will be given. Recommendations for practice and future research will round out the chapter.

**Chapter Five: Discussion**

*Contrary to what most people believe, a gifted mind is not necessarily able to find its own way. Although gifted students possess exceptional capabilities, most cannot excel without assistance. They need assistance academically, but they also need assistance emotionally through understanding, acceptance, support and encouragement.*
(Webb et al., 1994, p. 10)

**Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to explore the use of universal SEL curricula as the sole means for meeting the unique social and emotional needs of gifted students in a large school district in a western state. This was the central phenomenon in question. The literature review yielded a dearth of studies in which the impact of universal SEL curricula on the academic success of students was reported. None of the studies on general SEL that were found included disaggregated data reflecting the effects for gifted learners.

The problem that drove this study was that the district in question had no systemic social emotional programming in place for either typical students or specific to the developmental needs of its gifted students. As this district was moving towards the implementation of one SEL curriculum or differentiated curriculum at its schools, the social phenomenon at the center of this research was the use of commercially prepared universal SEL curricula as the sole means for meeting the unique social and emotional needs of gifted students. The phenomenon was investigated in its original context by way of a qualitative case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Streb, 2012, Yin, 2006). For the sake of narrowing the focus of this study, the researcher presented three research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of gifted learners addressed by universal social and emotional learning curricula?

2. What are teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the universal social emotional learning curricula employed in their classrooms for their gifted and talented students?

3. How does utilization of universal social emotional learning curricula address the social and emotional needs of gifted students?

Conclusions were drawn from the research questions and the findings related to the three data collection methods used in this study: the creation of the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017); findings related to the case and its embedded samples investigated with analysis done across those samples; and the use of the Rubric in analyzing the efficacy of each of the three universal SEL curriculum being used.

Chapter Five will discuss the major findings for the research questions which guided this study. Themes and assertions resulting from the findings of this qualitative case study as they relate to the theoretical framework and the research questions will also be presented. This chapter will be organized as follows: a summary of the study will be given, followed by the findings for each of the three research questions investigated. Limitations of the study, implications and recommendations for policy and practice, and recommendations for future research will follow. Finally, the conclusion of this study will complete the chapter and the research write-up.

**Summary of the Study**

Gifted education researchers maintain that the social emotional needs of gifted children are different from those of children of average ability (e.g., Betts, 2016; Coleman et al., 2015; Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Neihart et al., 2016). "Today, we believe that both ability and environment must be considered because social and emotional characteristics share and are shaped by interactions with others" (Neihart et al., 2016, p. 1). The theoretical framework of this study was grounded in the concept that learning takes place in a social setting. Gifted learners' social emotional development is based in the cultural milieu of the classroom and the school in which they are placed. Social constructivism and Bandura's (2001, 2006) social cognitive theory (SCT), support the idea that growing up gifted, due to the interplay of advanced abilities and the differing social experiences of gifted learners, is a qualitatively different experience than the experiences of their average ability peers (Neihart et al., 2016). The SCT and Bandura's (2001, 2006) work, based on higher levels of cognition, give importance to the triadic reciprocity theory in the creation of social emotional developmental curriculum for the gifted. This theory attests to the importance of personal and environmental factors influencing each other (Burney, 2008). These factors are at play in both academic and SEL genres.

As the data collection method in Figure 12 (p. 121) showed, there was an overlap between the components of SEL curriculum for the general population of students and those needed by gifted learners. Although the gifted population in this case study was a subset of the total population, the universal approach for teaching social and emotional

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skills and competencies was found to most likely be ineffective due to the differences in social and emotional needs between the gifted learners and the general population of students (Lovecky, 1992; Neihart, 2006; VanTassel-Baska, 2009). Schneider's (1987) statement rings true today in the case studied here, "As is the case for any minority, the social acceptance of the gifted depends in part on the readiness in society to accept, even appreciate, their unique attributes" (p. 13).

This study contributes to the body of knowledge on meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted learners in the regular classroom by advancing the research on the efficacy of three curricula designed for universal SEL purposes. A dearth of information on the study of this phenomenon was found in the literature base. As the school district in this study is choosing whether to adopt SEL curricula for all students in all schools, the summary and findings of this study can offer recommendations on this practice. Currently, there are no specific systemic SEL curricula being used for the social and emotional support or development of the gifted learners in this large school district. The interviews of The District administrators point out that there is no consensus as to the importance of specific social emotional support for those students. Therefore, a narrative description and analysis were done for the three universal curricula currently being used in the regular classrooms. This analysis combined with the analysis of the teacher interviews helped to give a clear picture of how these curricula would or would not meet the gifted learners' needs.

The participants in the embedded sub-cases were three elementary teachers of heterogeneously grouped classes. The teachers taught third, fourth, and fifth grades at

three different schools. Their teaching experience ranged from one who had taught 6 years, one 8 and one 17. Their class sizes ranged from 19 to 24 students, and the percentage of identified gifted learners were 8%, 25%, and 47%. Only one teacher had experience with a universal SEL curriculum other than the one they were using. Each teacher was also a parent. Much of the demographic data was gathered by analyzing documents about the schools and the school district found online. Some were gathered via the semi-structured interviews conducted with the teachers. Interviews in a case study such as this one, provide accounts of real-life events within classrooms. As a data collection tool, these semi-structured interviews (Appendix C) gave insight into the teachers' perceptions of each curriculum's efficacy when used with their identified gifted students. Upon analysis of the interview transcripts, themes emerged (Appendix Q). The social structure of the classrooms, and the environments in which the gifted students were accessing the SEL curriculum in each school, were analyzed through the lenses of the NAGC Standards (Johnsen, 2012) found in Figure 15 and the additional standards for teacher preparation (found in Appendix L). Affective curriculum that is based on social cognitive theories and that focus on issues of self-regulation, self-concept, and self-efficacy are particularly effective when used to help gifted and talented students develop their social and emotional needs (Moon, 2009). These topics were found in part in the curricula evaluated - one had a greater amount than the other two.

Thematic data analysis was used to analyze the collected data from the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to create the Rubric for later use on evaluating the curricula, data was collected and analyzed using qualitative content analysis of the

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literature. From this work, codes were created which led to categories representing

specific characteristics of gifted learners' social emotional developmental and supportive

needs. The data pointed to unique needs of gifted students, which were not found in two

of the three curricula analyzed and evaluated. The analysis of the data suggests that two

of the universal SEL curricula, Well-Managed Schools and Second Step, do not contain

enough of the affective aspects from the Rubric's categories and sub-categories to

support gifted learners' needs.  This study added to the body of knowledge addressing the

social and emotional needs described by many gifted education researchers (e.g.,

Assouline & Colangelo, 2015; Betts, 2016; Cavilla, 2016; Ferguson, 2006; Plucker &

Callahan, 2014; VanTassel-Baska, 2009).

**Summary of Findings and Assertions**

Nolen and Talbert (2011), assert that "the qualitative researcher offers a web of

connections within and across cases." (p. 269). In this case, it is within the case. In

qualitative research, the conclusions based on the findings often start new discussions

related to the topic, rather than offer concrete conclusions (Creswell, 2013, Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016; Nolen & Talbert, 2011). The phenomenon central to the exploration of this

study was the use of commercially prepared universal SEL curricula as the sole means for

meeting the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted students.

Research on universal SEL in general school settings for all students initiated the

process of the literature review. The impetus for this research was the recent surge in the

inclusion of SEL into schools and classrooms across the country, inclusion that showed

significant positive effects on academic growth in school settings where SEL was used

systematically (e.g. Dodge et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2009; Maras et al., 2014; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014; Zins et al., 2007).

Even as the researcher gathered and analyzed research for the various topics found in the literature review, new studies, articles, briefs, and other forms of information continued to be published. Jones et al. (2017), one of the most recent publications, is just one example showing that the current educational focus on SEL is unlikely to diminish any time soon. Belfield et al. (2015) discuss evidence showing the economic benefits and value of SEL. García and Weiss (2016) expound on this focus at both the domestic and international level describing the inclusion of non-cognitive skills in UNESCO's Incheon Declaration for Education 2030. However, Duckworth and Yeager (2015), in addition to Garcia and Weiss (2016), discuss the relative difficulty of measuring these skills for use in accountability calculations. They caution policymakers and educators from using any SEL assessments for between-school comparisons, particularly when different types of SEL programs are used in different settings. Although the concept of accountability has yet to be solved, SEL appears to have taken root as a means for improving academic success (e.g., Durlak et al., 2011; Dusenbury et al., 2015; Zins et al., 2007). Although, in all of the research on the impact of SEL, there appears to be an absence of research relating universal SEL and gifted learners.

**Descriptive narrative – Case and embedded units.** Descriptive data regarding the district on which this case study was focused was presented. Each of the sub-case sample school's descriptive data was also chronicled. Descriptions of each of the curriculum in question were also given. In qualitative research case studies,

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participants' perceptions of the phenomenon at the heart of this research, the use of universal SEL curricula for meeting the social emotional developmental needs of gifted students, were quoted. This allowed the researcher to view reality at the heart of this research, building confidence in the accuracy with which this study is presented to its readers (Yin, 2003, 2007). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a way to achieve external validity is to provide thick description of the case. "By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people" (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

   *The District.* In this large, high-performing district, the district guidelines, mission statement, vision, and goals all address the importance of supporting individual students to be the best they can be (Appendix N). Table 2 on page 169, highlights words and phrases found in those documents for support for SEL, and for meeting the unique needs of gifted learners. In one of the value statements, the phrase "incorporate strengths, unique learning needs and intellectual growth" is included. This alludes to The District being aware of different needs of its students. In The District's goals and strategies section of the documents, the phrases "Address the unique learning needs, assess the success of each child," and the desire for all children to "continue to learn" can be found. Since these goals have been elevated to a high importance level by being included in this important document for the state, again, the researcher concludes that there is an awareness of the desire to look at students for individual needs. Another one of the Value Statements is, "We address the intellectual growth, health and physical development, and

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social emotional well-being of students." Therefore, these findings pointing to the unique social and emotional needs of gifted learners suggest that those needs should be addressed.

Findings from the document review show that the only personnel currently in schools specifically working with gifted students are primarily responsible for seeing that the ALPs are created, entered into The District's database, shared with families, and evaluated each school year. The job description for these positions does not require that these staff members have any background in gifted education, or even a 4-year degree. And, the job description also does not allow them to provide instruction for the gifted students. Leaving teachers and counselors to be responsible for gifted learner's unique social and emotional development is also problematic, as the state statute insists that those who work with gifted students "shall be knowledgeable in the characteristics, differentiated instructional methods and competencies in the special education of gifted students." Since there are no guidelines for teachers or counselors to have training for working with gifted learners, it seems that there are no personnel currently employed who can specifically provide the needed support for gifted SEL.

Both the recommendations of the state's Department of Education and the CASEL report findings strongly recommended that The District implement systemic SEL in order to meet its UIP goals. CASEL suggested using the existing MTSS structure and that PBL would also be a means for integrating SEL into all grades and subjects. CASEL outlined a 3-year implementation plan.

***School A and Well Managed Schools.*** This neighborhood school of 408 students was using the Well-Managed Schools (Hensley et al., 2011) universal curriculum systemically. Analysis of Teacher A's interview transcript, description of the school using document analysis, and the curriculum were done. In comparing the demographic data gathered through documents, this school had the smallest population, at 408 students, and was the median sample for free and reduced lunch percentage, a statistic often used as a stand-in for measures of socioeconomic status (Snyder & Musu-Gillette, 2016). It was also the median sample for English language learners (ELL) and had the lowest percentage of identified TAG students at 6.1%. School A had the highest percentage of students on IEP's or 504's and was the median sample in terms of the diversity of its students, with 66.2% being Caucasian. This school had a high mobility rate, with students coming and going throughout the school year, according to the teacher. The school was in its fourth year of using the Well Managed Schools (Hensley et al., 2011) curriculum.

Teacher A had the most teaching experience, with 17 years, and she had been using this curriculum since its first year. Her class size was almost equal to School B, with 23 students, but she had the fewest identified gifted students of all three samples, in number and percentage, with only two. Using this curriculum was her first experience with an SEL curriculum. Teacher A, along with the other two, was also a parent. The curriculum she was using was a skill-based scripted program whose purpose was to manage student behavior and reduce office referrals and disruptive behavior. The high mobility rate of the students coming and going from this school would sometimes require

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the teacher to, "Have to go back and do some of that re-teaching to them, or teaching in general." She described her students as enjoying the lessons when they practice the skills during their class meeting time. She explained that she thought the curriculum was brought into her building so that teachers wouldn't have to always manage student behavior, but that introducing these skills school-wide would give "Kids tools to manage their own behavior." Teachers originally participated in a 2- or 3-day training and undertook a refresher each year. Using the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017), Well Managed Schools didn't fare well on its inclusion of topics needed by gifted learners. It had the most checks in the "not mentioned" column — at 39 — than either of the other curricula. In the "well-covered" column, it had the fewest checks, with only four. Based on the interview questions, probing, and follow-up questions, the researcher did not get any insight into Teacher A's experiences with the nature and needs of gifted learners, or about differentiation in the SEL curriculum or other aspects of the classroom.

   ***School B and Second Step.***  The second school analyzed for this study, School B, was also a neighborhood school. The staff had implemented the Second Step (Committee for Children, 2014) curriculum at some grade levels the previous year, but this was the first school year that they were using it building wide.  According to the interview, the principal acted on his own to have the teachers look through and try some of their grade level curriculum the previous year. School B was the median sized school in this study, with 438 students. Of those students, it was the school with the least percentage of students on free and reduced lunch at 3.6% and on ELL at 2.5%; each of these is considerably less than the other two samples. The percentage of identified TAG students

was also the median at 7.3%. This school had the largest percentage of Caucasian students, almost 77%, and only 5.9% of students were on IEP's or 504's.

Teacher B had been teaching for the fewest years, at six, was also a parent, and out of her 24 students she had six who were identified TAG. She also worked with an afterschool program that was designed for TAG students, but not limited to those who were identified. She was the only teacher who had experience with another type of whole-school SEL curriculum. This came up quite a few times during the interview as she compared the two and still supplements Second Step with some of the lessons from the other curriculum. Her take on the curriculum's effects on students is that it is sometimes seen as "our hour of entertainment a week," as opposed to the previous curriculum which was homegrown by the staff and included many opportunities for students to act out scenarios, which are absent from the Second Step lessons. To teach the Second Step lessons with fidelity, she points out the lack of opportunities for rearranging the lessons to take advantage of teachable moments. She also reports that she does "it every week pretty consistently." When asked if she had been through a training for this curriculum, she answered that, "We didn't have one. We just got this big manual."

The Second Step curriculum was designed as a violence prevention program to both reduce problem behaviors and build social competencies. The scripted lessons are designed to be taught lock-step, with weekly topics based on the four specific units: empathy, emotion management, problem solving, and skills for learning. Second Step did only slightly better than Well Managed Schools when evaluated for identified support of gifted learners' social and emotional needs based on the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner,

2017). It had 31 checks for sub-categories "not mentioned," more "little mention" sub-categories than Well Managed Schools, and more well-covered, at six checks, versus the four that were determined in the Well Managed Schools' results.

During the interview, the unique social and emotional needs of gifted students did come up. Teacher B shared, "I've got these really smart kids, and they don't know how to work as a team." "They don't know what to do when they're feeling really angry or frustrated, or when they're seeing things totally in some black and white viewpoint – they don't have negotiating skills to bring people along. And they don't know how to be kind when they're disagreeing." She continues that she tries to build those skills into content areas such as science, because they aren't "really part of Second Step. It has some things that are missing." She also laments that some of her gifted students have been told, "Oh you're so smart. You're so brilliant. You're so capable." On her own, she is working on teaching growth mindsets and resiliency by purposely giving a very difficult math problem so that they will learn how to struggle without feeling like they are a "poser."

***School C and Conscious Discipline.*** The final sample for this study was School C, Teacher C, and the Conscious Discipline curriculum (Bailey, 2015). This school was a focus school with a special program. With its 470 students, it was the largest. It also had the highest number of students on free and reduced lunch, with 51.8%, 35.7% of ELL learners, and the highest percentage of identified TAG students at 15.1%. It was also the most diverse school in that only 32.3% of the students were Caucasian. The number of SPED/504 students was the median of the group at 16.8%.

Teacher C had the smallest class size with only 19 students, and the largest group and percentage of students identified as gifted and talented with nine; almost half of her class. She was also a parent and, like teacher A, did not have any previous experience with an SEL curriculum before Conscious Discipline. Her 8 years of teaching experience put her in the middle of the group of teachers participating in this study. The school had been using the curriculum for three or four years, beginning in kindergarten, and rolling it up grade levels each year. The staff as a group decided, after looking at several options, to adopt the curriculum school-wide. They began with whole school PD including bringing in a professional trainer for the program. Although this was her first year teaching the curriculum, different from the purposeful sampling protocol, the interview was done in the spring, thus giving her time to get experience with it. School C used continuous monthly PD around the application of Conscious Discipline. She explained that the systematization of this curriculum across grade levels, teachers, and all staff, was one of positive aspects of this program.

As a curriculum, Conscious Discipline requires teachers to use the program to work on controlling their own thoughts, behaviors, and actions. The use of modeling these behaviors is an integral aspect of its implementation. Another key component is teaching students brain science by way of instruction that focuses on there being three different brain states: survival, emotional, and executive (Bailey, 2015). Once students learn many of the basic principles, the goals involve teaching strategies that build on those components. The survival state is equated with safety; the emotional state involves connecting with people; and the executive state is used to teach tools, characteristics, and

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skills necessary for problem-solving. Instead of discreet scripted lessons, this program is integrated into all parts of a student's day. This makes Conscious Discipline stand out from the other two curricula evaluated in this study.

Teacher C's comments during the interview process related to the efficacy of this curriculum for her gifted students began with comments about how some of them "became hyper-vigilant, or hyper-sensitive to it…a couple of them became very self-critical." As part of the program involves students self-assessing, it was hard for some of them to be self-critical if they did not have all the skills mastered right away. She did some of her own informal testing on some of her students before and after the interventions involved in teaching students the different parts of the Conscious Discipline curriculum. Most of the students in her testing were identified gifted learners. She found that they were engaged, curious, wanted to know why they were doing the program and how it was going to be effective in their lives. She recounted that they wanted to see the big picture. Her analysis showed that all the students in her cohort group were trending in a positive way.

**Discussion of Research Questions**

In this qualitative intrinsic case study, there were three questions posed to guide the research on the use of universal SEL curricula for meeting the social emotional needs of gifted learners. Data were collected using three methods to allow for triangulation. Qualitative case study depends on the triangulation of both methods and data for validating and corroborating research results (Bowen, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2012). Creswell (2016) states that triangulation also adds validity to research results.

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The first method for collecting data was document review which was used to

provide a rich description of The District, the schools and the curricula used in those

schools. Semi-structured interviews with the teachers provided a second form of data

collection through which to analyze for findings. The third was using the Rubric created

from the extant literature on SEL, gifted learners' psychosocial characteristics, and

programming models for gifted affective programming. Answers to the research

questions were emergent throughout this study (Creswell, 2003). This was an intrinsic

case study, as the focus was on the case itself and its unique situation set within the real-

life context of a school system (Creswell, 2013). Each of the research questions will be

addressed and supporting data will be provided as the inductive process used for

developing arguments for each will be presented (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

**RQ1.** The first question in this study asked: *What are the characteristics of gifted*

*learners addressed by universal social and emotional learning curricula?* The data

analysis involved in the findings related to the characteristics of gifted learners' social

and emotional developmental needs, partially came from the expert reviewers and

partially from a deep search of the empirical studies and literature related to the social

and emotional needs of gifted students. This allowed the researcher to determine 11

categories through which curricula can be analyzed in determining its efficacy for use

with gifted learners (Appendix K). These categories are also supported by many of the

theoretical supports from Chapter Two. Social emotional learning is based in the social

cognitive theory of learning as a social construct (Bandura, 1977, 2006). The

characteristics of gifted learners' social and emotional developmental needs include

interpersonal communication and self-efficacy. Overexcitabilities are also an aspect of gifted characteristics supported by Dabrowski's Theory of Overexcitabilities (Moon, 2009; Piechowski, 2014, 2017). Constructivism, also supports the answers to RQ1. According to Creswell (2003) and Palincsar (2005), learners need to interact with their peers and environment to construct their own understanding and knowledge.

Each of the following areas are further described using the categories and sub-categories found through the data collection and analysis related to the first research question. The sub-categories represented in the Rubric represent facets of the main categories and could assist those with limited experience working with gifted students. The categories are: (a) asynchronous development, (b) emotional intelligence, (c) feelings of being different, (c) interpersonal communication, (d) introspective focus, (e) overexcitabilities, (f) perfectionism, (g) wellness/mindfulness, (h) risk-taking, (i) talent development, and (j) provisions for referring students who may need more intense work on their psychosocial needs. The Rubric allows evaluators to determine whether the sub-categories are mentioned, the amount of time they are mentioned, or the depth of support there is for each area.

These categories, based on the characteristics found, exemplify the differences between the SEL support for typical students and that which was found in the literature related to social and emotional needs of gifted learners. One major difference between these groups of students is often attributed to gifted learners' greater intellectual intensity which often sets them apart from their more typical same-aged peers (e.g., Little, Xuemei Feng, VanTassel-Baska, Rogers, & Avery, 2007; Silverman, 1993, 2000, Sisk, 2005).

According to the research, there are also some stressors more indicative of gifted learners which need to be part of social and emotional support programming for them. These include intensity; sensitivity; pressure of expectations (both internal and external), perfectionism, and low tolerance of frustrations (Moon, 2002, 2007). With a mental age higher than their actual age, other characteristics also require gifted students to have opportunities for daily interaction with their intellectual peers in order to achieve and maintain a positive self-concept (Neihart, 2006; Rogers, 2007; VanTassel-Baska, 2009).

Several excerpts from the interview transcripts also spoke to specific characteristics of gifted students. Teacher A noted, when discussing what she would change in her curriculum, the steps expected of students were "really, really, wordy," and that gifted learners would get frustrated, "Because the triggers in their brain is [*sic*] going to be different from a typical learner." She also explained that one of her gifted students was "really sensitive," and that she thinks the system in use in her school allows for the opportunity "they need to process in a different way." She alludes to the idea of differentiation when she states that, "I think for them it [the curriculum] needs to be just a bit deeper."

Eriksson's Objectives of Differentiated Guidance and Counseling for Gifted Students shown in Figure 9 (Cavilla, 2016) illustrates some of the topics necessary for inclusion in an affective program for gifted students. This model shows two ways of looking at these differences in characteristics - one as gifted learners' deficits in the social emotional realm and the other side as positive ways to see those. The positive aspect is

much more focused on the strength-based approach of the positive psychology approach (Proyer et al., 2016, Renzulli, 2003).

| Deficit Model | The individual affective | Asset Model |
|---|---|---|
| Remedial<br>Conformist<br>Abnormal behavior<br>Leveling needs<br>Socialization<br>Insensitive<br>Problematic<br>Maintain status quo<br>Egoistic<br>Correctional<br>Crisis intervention<br>Emergency<br>Random activity<br>Unresponsive<br><br>Negative Disintegration<br><br>Balance of cognitive and affective needs in line with normal development for age<br><br>*Cure* | **needs of the unique**<br><br>**gifted student** | Developmental<br>Differentiated<br>"Supernormal" behaviors<br>Self-actualizing needs<br>Individualization<br>Hypersensitive<br>Extensive possibilities<br>Transform society<br>Altruistic<br>Constructive/productive<br>Preventive<br>Proactive<br>Focused alertness<br>Overexcitabilities (OE)<br><br>Positive Disintegration<br><br>Fulfillment of cognitive and affective needs through higher level activities<br><br>*Transcend* |

*Figure 9.* Eriksson's Objectives of Differentiated Guidance and Counseling for Gifted Students (as cited in Cavilla, 2016). Reprinted with permission.

**RQ2.** The second research question was: *What are teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the universal social emotional learning curricula employed in their classrooms for their gifted and talented students?* Teacher interviews were used to determine these findings related to their perceptions of the efficacy of the universal curriculum each used in her classroom. Three themes emerged from the interview

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transcripts: (1) the teacher's perceptions of the social and emotional needs of their gifted students, (2) school-wide decisions made related to the curriculum in use, and (3) the teacher's perceptions of the curriculum itself, its strengths and weaknesses and suggestions for improving it (Appendix Q).

Each of the teachers discussed their gifted students and the shortfalls of the curriculum they were using. One of the teachers didn't mention differentiation of the curriculum to better meet their needs, but the other two definitively talked about ways they changed the material to better meet the needs of their identified gifted students. The curriculum in use in School A calls for much repetition of the strategies for behavior modification. Teacher A commented that, "I haven't had to use this much with my gifted kiddos." She also discussed some effective differentiation strategies in use during academic instruction, showing that she does have strategies for that. Teacher B pointed out several specifics that her gifted students needed that were not included in the curriculum her school was using. One missing topic had to do with teamwork and negotiating skills, particularly when disagreeing with others. She also discussed the process of the lessons, "Sometimes they [the problems] go over three or four lessons which to work on the same problem for a whole month, once a week is really not great." She also pointed out, "The struggles that most of my gifted kids have aren't even a part of the curriculum." The analysis of these interviews points out that teachers do not have a positive impression of the universal curricula in place in their classrooms for their gifted students. The theoretical supports and the conceptual framework are based in the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2006), which points to gifted learners developing self-

efficacy, and being given strategies and supports to work on self-control and cognition. These teachers found the curricula they were using less than supportive of these needs for their gifted students.

**RQ3.** Research question number three explored the following: *How does utilization of universal social emotional learning curricula address the social and emotional needs of gifted students?* Finally, the evaluation of each curriculum was made utilizing the Rubric created for this purpose. In addition to the teacher comments in the previous section, research was done on the three curricula in this study, and then the researcher used the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017) found in Appendix K on each. Three different commercially created universal SEL curricula were analyzed using the Rubric created for this study. As mentioned above, and shown in Appendices Q, R, and S, two of the curricula, Well-Managed Schools (Hensley et al., 2011, 2016) and Second Step (Committee for Children, 2014), offered very little support for the sub-categories in the Rubric. Conscious Discipline (Bailey, 2015) included at least some mention of many of the sub-categories.

The data gathered using the Rubric found in Appendices Q, R, and S, show that none of the universal curricula used in these sample schools covered each of the topics and sub-topics listed in the Rubric. These findings are consistent with previous research such as that reviewed by Jen (2017). She stated that, "The social and emotional development of the high-ability youths is more complex in comparison with their similar-aged peers" (p. 227). Her review focused on "empirical studies of direct affective intervention in promoting healthy social and emotional development of high-ability

students with evidenced data to support their conclusions" (p. 229). Moon (2009) divides affective interventions into direct instruction and indirect components, such as activities, clubs, and competitions. SENG's website (sengifted.org) contains many resources related to the programming needed for gifted learners' social and emotional developmental needs. Although the findings of this study could be compromised by the small sample size ($n = 3$) and the variability of the study, they suggest that universal SEL does not comprehensively address the social and emotional needs of gifted students.

**Assertions.** According to Nolen and Talbert (2011), by meeting three conditions during this qualitative research study, the researcher was able to make claims with confidence; throughout this study, the researcher strove to ensure the presence of all the conditions. Each of the assertions discussed below emanated from the six themes discussed in Chapter Four. The first consideration for ensuring that the data collected were sufficient to answer the research questions, and thus analytically induce assertions, began with ensuring the study was based in the research literature. Supporting this study with research took place both during the literature review in Chapter Two, and also in the document review during the analysis of the data (Bretschneider et al., 2016). Secondly, the role of the researcher was delineated and clarified in Chapter Three. Finally, the third condition was met when the researcher laid out the process of data analysis in Chapter Four in detail for each of the three research questions. Nolen and Talbert (2011) tout the importance of transparency in each of these three conditions, and the researcher strove to ensure as much transparency existed in the research steps as possible, in order to "provide a credible explanation for some aspect of educational processes" (p. 269).

During the data analysis portion of this study, themes and assertions began to emerge from the document review, qualitative content analysis, and the interview analysis. Analytic induction occurs when the evidence from the study has been persistently reviewed to find patterns which connect via threads across multiple sources of data (Erickson, 2012). In this intrinsic qualitative case study research, the researcher discovered patterns through reevaluating the data in an iterative and inductive manner. The following assertions came from connections across the various pieces of data collected. In the first section of the assertion explanations, the research questions discussed above will be addressed as they relate to each of the assertions.

*Assertion 1 — Gifted children have additional social and emotional needs from their more typical same age peers.* In addressing the research questions above, the conceptual framework for RQ1 shown in Figure 11 can also be used to illustrate this first assertion. In that diagram there is an overlap in the components of universal SEL curricula and the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. Yet there are additional aspects of the gifted learners' needs from those found in universal SEL curricula. Through the interview data, the teacher participants in this study also recognized those differences. Finally, using the Rubric for evaluating three commercially prepared universal SEL curricula also highlighted those differences.

Beginning with the document review undertaken to create the Rubric, much of the research supported the additional needs of gifted learners from their same-age peers. Some of the studies, articles, and books that supported many of the categories in the Rubric were Chelin, 2015; Hébert, 2012; Lovecky, 1992; Neihart, 1999, 2006, 2016;

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Neihart et al., 2016; VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh, 2010; Webb, 1996; and Webb et al., 2007.

There were three cross-sample themes that emerged from the analysis of the teacher interview transcripts. The one related to this assertion is that of the different social and emotional needs of their gifted students. Even with the small sample ($n = 3$), there was a wide variety of perceptions on the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. Each of the teachers interviewed discussed their perceptions of the social emotional needs not only of their gifted students, but gifted students in general. These comments are found in Appendix Q. Examples that support this assertion include comments by Teacher B and C. Teacher B's comments support the existence of unique social and emotional developmental needs of her gifted students.

> "Now, I've got these really smart kids, and they don't know how to work as a team. And they don't know how to -- when they're feeling really angry or frustrated or when they're seeing things totally in some black and white viewpoint -- they don't have any negotiating skills to bring people along. And they don't know how to be kind when they're disagreeing.' It's just all these things that ..."

In these statements, she is revealing that even with the Second Step curriculum in use, her identified gifted students continue to have difficulties related to social and emotional development. Teacher C stated that, "For a couple of those students who were very goal-oriented, if they didn't meet the goal [from the Conscious Discipline lessons], and they knew that they weren't quite there yet, they were more critical of themselves than perhaps other students would be." This shows that when participating in the SEL curriculum activities, the identified students were more stressed out than the other

students. These are just some of the examples from the data that support the first assertion.

**Assertion** *2 — Many classroom teachers lack training on the nature and needs of gifted learners' academic or affective needs.* The characteristics of gifted learners represented in the universal curricula used in the sample schools were incomplete. The teachers at those schools did recognize a lack of efficacy in each of their curricula. The rubric used pointed out that without the direction from the curriculum documents, teachers with a lack of training would have no support from the curriculum to guide them in providing their gifted students with their developmental needs.

Although most of the interview transcripts showed some teacher knowledge of the nature and needs of their gifted students, there were several examples in Teacher A's interview that provided evidence for this assertion. Teacher A had perceptions at both ends of the social and emotional needs spectrum. She commented, regarding social and emotional needs, that one of her gifted students "Doesn't need anything, honestly," and her other student was "Probably one of the most immature kids I've ever had. Ever. But just incredibly bright." Her comment that one of her gifted students didn't have any social and emotional needs, while her other gifted student was "the most immature student she had ever taught" was very interesting.

In the evaluation of the curricula, the analysis and evaluation done using the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017), particularly for Well-Managed Schools (Hensley et al., 2016) and Second Step (Committee for Children, 2014), were geared for all

students, with no information on any differences between gifted and typical students in any of the teaching materials.

*Assertion 3 — Support and direction for gifted learners' social and emotional developmental needs exist at the local, state and national levels.* Although the characteristics of gifted learners' social and emotional developmental needs were not supported in the universal curricula in use at the study sites, there were glimpses of knowledge at the local level. The state's ECEA, the accompanying rules, and the state education department's website do support those needs. At the national level, NAGC and SENG have documents, materials, and many other forms of support that could be used to make changes for this district. Including these elements would provide supplemental or replacement instruction outside of the curricula in use.

At all three levels there is recognition that gifted students have unique needs. During the document review, the district guidance documents were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The Vision, Mission, Value Statements and Goals and Strategies are documented in Appendix N. The summary of this analysis can be found in Table 2. Examples from these documents which support the specific social and emotional developmental needs of its gifted students can be found in text that refers to each student being treated as a unique individual, who is entitled to be engaged in learning at his/her own levels and supported to become a contributing member of society. The words and phrases that support this assertion will be italicized here. In The District's purpose statement, the word *unique* [emphasis added] is used: "Each child brings…a *unique* contribution." Next, the Vision Statement asserts that they will "Develop our

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children's *greatest abilities* [emphasis added]." The Mission Statement reads, "The

mission of the [District] is to create *challenging* [emphasis added], meaningful and

*engaging* [emphasis added] learning opportunities so that all children thrive and are

prepared for successful, civically engaged lives." Other words and phrases suggesting

support for gifted and talented students include: "*incorporate strengths, unique learning*

*needs, intellectual growth, address the unique learning needs*, *assess the success of each*

*child* [emphasis added]." In addition to these examples, The District has also created a

new web page with their talented and gifted information listed,

http://contenthub.bvsd.org/tag/Pages/default.aspx.

At the state level, there are many resources for parents, teachers, and others

related to the gifted and talented on the CDE gifted and talented website at

https://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/about. Access is also given to the CDE Gifted Education

Guidelines (Chelin, 2012), which include one of the four components focused on Social-

Emotional and Career Guidance for Gifted Students. The passage of the ECEA, HB 14-

1102, supporting the identification, academic and social emotional needs of gifted

learners is another piece of evidence that the state supports its gifted children.

In this study, the evidence found related to the national support of gifted learners

and their social and emotional developmental needs can be found at the NAGC website,

http://www.nagc.org. In this study, Figure 16 and Appendix L provide evidence of this

support. Another national organization that is clearly supportive of the social and

emotional needs of the gifted in SENG, discussed in Chapter Two. The passage of the

TALENT Act in 2015, shows the national support for the development of high ability learners.

*Assertion 4 — Universal SEL curriculum is not comprehensive enough to meet the affective needs of gifted learners.*  The characteristics of gifted learner's social and emotional developmental needs found in the universal curricula fall short of what is needed. The teachers, in the interviews, recognized this shortfall, although to differing degrees. The results from the use of the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017) on each of the three curricula analyzed and evaluated are found in Appendices Q, R, and S. Table 8 shows a comparison between the scores on the Rubric for each one. Although Conscious Discipline (Bailey, 2015) was scored at about 75% of the possible points on the Rubric, it still had some weak areas, as described above. However, the other two, Well-Managed Schools (Hensley et al., 2016) and Second Step (Committee for Children, 2014), were scored at about 5% and 10% respectively using the Rubric.

*Assertion 5 — **As in academics, SEL needs to be differentiated and supplemented for gifted students.***  The Rubric used to evaluate the curricula in this study did not analyze for differentiation in the curriculum documents, although the researcher saw no mention of ways to differentiate for any needs, whether that be students with learning disabilities or those with high academic achievement. There was no mention of pre-testing for student readiness or other differentiation strategies in any of the lessons or teacher materials (Kingore & Kingore, 2013; Little et al., 2007; Winebrenner & Brulles, 2012). Several of the teacher comments from the interview transcripts do support this assertion. Teacher B commented that, "I'm one of those people

who really believes the best way to support them [gifted students] is in the classroom, and

that you need to — That's really what drives all of the differentiation I do." She also, in

her suggestions for improving the curriculum for her gifted learners, commented, "If it

was more modular, and then you could have a palette of things to choose from. It would

be like differentiating, right?" And, she also stated that, "This curriculum is not

differentiated." These are supports for assertion 5.

These themes and assertions, based on the data collection and analysis from this

research study, are illustrated in Figure 26.
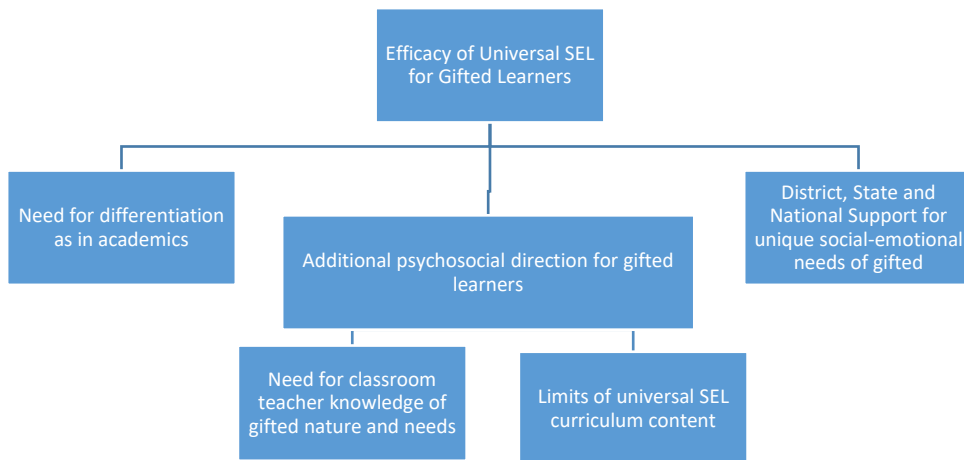


*Figure 26* Conceptual Framework for Assertions

**Limitations of the Study**

"As researchers, we bring our interpretations or frames of meaning into that

which we observed, and our task is to become increasingly aware of these culturally

laden interpretations and how these frame what we observe" (Nolen & Talbert, 2011, p.

268). The primary limitation of this study involved the role that the researcher played as an educator in The District being studied and her personal passion on the topics of SEL and gifted education. Beginning with the selection of the case itself, and the participants, the researcher makes decisions on the research study and adds limitations in many different areas (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although it is advantageous for the researcher to have a strong background in the phenomenon being studied, this can also act as a limitation depending on the handling of this potential bias (Nolen & Talbert, 2011). Through the interview process, it is possible that the researcher as interviewer may have sent signals to the interviewees that caused them to answer in ways they thought the researcher would want. Although case studies are intended to have small participant sizes in order to precipitate rich thick descriptive data, this study, with only three embedded samples, can also have limited generalizability of assertions (Creswell, 2007). Another major limitation involved the short time span for gathering data, which was during the 2016 - 2017 school year. More time would have lent itself to gathering more data, including increasing the opportunity for observation and perhaps the gathering of artifacts from student learning. Reporting the data in such a way as to preserve the anonymity of the participants may have also placed limitations on the results. Some of these limitations surfaced as the study progressed.

One unmentioned topic thus far related to the adoption of SEL curricula is that of the fidelity of implementation. According to O'Donnell (2008), this more recent topic associated with the effectiveness of curricular intervention can be defined as the "determination of how well an intervention is implemented in comparison with the

original design during an efficacy or effectiveness study" (p. 33). In discussing a more

effective means for using the curriculum already in place, each teacher discussed ways in

which the curriculum could be adapted to better meet the needs of the gifted students in

her classroom. In his change model, Fullan (2007, 2016) explains that change often

involves intrinsic dilemmas of apparently mutually exclusive factors. Thus, he explains

that when implementing new curricula there may be a need to balance both fidelity and

adaptability during the process. The meaning of assessing the success of educational

change may require fidelity to both the structure and the process of new interventions

(Fullan, 2007). Consideration is not always a given in research on new curricula's

implementations. A limitation of this and any study related to new curricula

implementations is whether there is fidelity to the use of the materials, the teaching

approach, and the beliefs that may be underlying the focus for the change (Fullan, 2016).

Finally, in terms of limitations related to the subject of this study, Neihart (2016)

states that, "A major limitation of the research on psychosocial factors is that most of it is

correlational" (p. 165). Small convenience samples, differing definitions and

understandings of giftedness, lack of longitudinal studies, and lack of study comparisons

between gifted and non-gifted participants are all limitations inherent in the current

literature and empirical evidence on the social emotional development of the gifted

(Wiley, 2016). This is just one area of research yet to be done related to meeting the

social and emotional needs of gifted students through affective program development.

**Implications for Policy**

Implications for this study related to policies in the district that was the focus of this study relate to its UIP goals, the state's ECEA law (2007), and the findings of the CASEL report. Each of these relate to both providing SEL programs for typical students and for gifted students. The state called for extensive district level support and preparation for implementation of MTSS in schools. Supporting gifted learners and their specific academic and affective needs is a part of MTSS. The state also called for schools to implement higher levels of differentiation. Inadequate SEL resources was another concern. By implementing SEL programming that is differentiated to support the needs of gifted students, these goals could all be met. Each of these pieces, as they relate to district policy, determines that the 15% of the student population already identified as gifted and talented, as well as others who may not yet be identified, is an important focus for The District to make. Additionally, the findings related to the district level administrator's interview show that having someone who knows the state statutes related to gifted education and to state policy would be beneficial for the purposes of covering several important interrelated topics with the implementation of effective SEL for all students.

**Implications for Practice**

The findings from this study have implications related to the practice of using universal SEL curricula in mixed ability classrooms, with the goal of meeting all students' needs. Teachers given curricula which supports the categories from the Rubric, may be slightly better able to meet the social emotional needs for the students in their

classrooms than those given curricula absent skill development support for those

categories. Another implication for practice based on this study is that using any SEL

curriculum is not a substitute for an awareness of the nature and needs of gifted learners

by classroom teachers. VanTassel-Baska (2009) suggests that teachers should also gain

some counseling skills to effectively support their gifted students social and emotional

needs. These would include skills such as withholding judgement, being effective

listeners, learning how to validate students' feelings, and learning how to summarize

what students are saying. In practice, universal SEL curricula use will be insufficient for

helping teachers be more aware of gifted learners' needs and for meeting those needs,

regardless of what curriculum is in use.

The criteria, sub-criteria and the Rubric's resources could also serve as a basis for

creating PD to give teachers information on the social and emotional needs of their gifted

students. These resources could be compiled and become the scaffold for the creation of a

study group for teachers at a building or district level.

**Implications for Research**

In terms of research, this study found that there are many, many other

commercially prepared curricula which could also be assessed using the Rubric from this

study. The Rubric is designed to show which skills are supported related to each of the

criteria and sub-criteria found in a curriculum, and the amount of coverage each of them

seem to be given. The Rubric is not meant to be used as a quantitative measure, but one

that gives evidence of the strengths and weaknesses in each area. Studies could also be

done where the Rubric is used to analyze SEL curricula geared towards gifted students,

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that which could be used in an included classroom or that which could be used with small groups of homogenously grouped gifted students. Other research ideas would include adding a survey to this study in which teachers could show what they already know about their gifted students' social and emotional needs.

Another research implication of this study would be to contact the writers and publishers of commercially created curricula to find out who, if anyone, involved in creating the curricula has a background in gifted education. Connecting curricula writers with contacts and resources related to gifted learners, experts in the field, and informing them of research studies related to gifted students' needs could open some fruitful dialogue opportunities. This could begin with the CASEL organization. The implication here is that not making connections between best practices in SEL and best practices in gifted education, particularly psychosocial needs, may lead to a disconnect and the incorrect assumption that any curriculum is one-size fits all. Simply taking some of the pre-made curricula and designing specific differentiation of the content, process, and products of learning and based on student readiness, learning style, and interests could go a long way to making a curriculum such as Conscious Discipline - a program with relatively high ratings using the Rubric - more effective for gifted learners.

Implications from the research done on empirical studies brought the researcher to a new book on the topic, the second edition of *The Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children: What Do We Know?* Neihart et al. (2016) compiled a list of gaps in the literature that the researcher felt would be important to share in this section of her study. First, they point out that there are major gaps in the literature related to the social and

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emotional developmental needs of gifted children. One aspect that they note is that even with the empirical research that has been done, there has been little evaluation of interventions done for meeting gifted learners' social and emotional needs. When it has been done, the methodologies are often weak due to small sample sizes and inadequate amount of time; and then often end up showing only correlation, with no follow-up or repetition. A few of the areas that they point out having little or no research support are: gifted learners with mental health problems; prevalence of other disorders, subclinical problems, or negative life effects; psychosocial functioning of underrepresented students; psychosocial functioning of children gifted in nonacademic domains; efficacy and effectiveness of recommended interventions for social and emotional needs; and the long-term effects of social emotional gifted programs. In the research on the effects of SEL programs on the academic improvement of students, no studies were found which disaggregated data related to universal SEL curricula's impact on gifted learners (Dodge et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2009; Maras et al., 2014; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014; Zins et al., 2007).

This study yielded important implications for educational practice, district policy, and for future research into effective ways to support gifted and talented students' social and emotional development. In a district such as this case, where gifted learners spend most or all of their day in heterogeneously grouped general education classrooms, specific services for their social and emotional needs are often unavailable. For many years across the country, Olenchak (2009) states, "Affective programming has been viewed by school professionals and parents alike to lack rigor and utility in preparing

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students for adult life and has thus led to its exclusion form school curricular efforts" (p. 41). This has been the case for all children, not just gifted ones. Beginning with the publication of Goleman's (1996) book on emotional intelligence, things in education began to change. One prominent study that supported this change was the meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011) which concluded that with increased social emotional competencies, students could also increase their cognitive abilities. Thus, support became well-spread for the infusion of instruction focused on psychosocial competencies for all students. SEL's genesis may have been with the work of Hollingworth and Roeper whose philosophies of education were both rooted in the belief that we should be teaching the whole child. Without focusing on both cognitive and emotional development, schools have been neglecting children's affective growth, the very thing that John Dewey, Bandura, and Vygotsky purported. Education is a socially interactive process. Without nurturing both aspects of student learning, neither will be fully developed. The idea that the social and emotional side of learning must take place in order to advance students' academic growth is becoming more pervasive in the realm of regular education. More research needs to be done on how the psychosocial development of gifted children impacts their academic growth.

The literature review portion of this study documented research showing the evolution of universal SEL support for all students. It also showed the synthesis of research and expert information pointing to the atypical affective needs of gifted students. With this data, the researcher was able to create an instrument with which district policy-makers, curriculum evaluators, teachers, and schools could analyze universal SEL

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curricula for its efficacy for gifted learners. The creation of the SELECTED Rubric™

(Turner, 2017) (Appendix K) offers a relatively simple system for decision-makers who

may not have background in the nature and needs of gifted students to evaluate universal

or other types of SEL curricula and in looking for its efficacy in meeting the needs of

gifted children.

**Recommendations for Policy**

As stated in Assertion 3, there is support and direction given at the local, state,

and national level for gifted learners' social and emotional developmental needs.

Currently, there is a gap in the implementation of these directions in the district in which

this study took place. Recommendations from this study urge specific actions be taken

with regard to policy, practice, and research. In terms of policy, this intrinsic case study

involved learning about an unusual situation in that The District did not have specific

systemic social emotional programming for its gifted population in place (Creswell,

2016). Recommendations for policy include the following:

1. The District policies should follow the Code of state Regulations, Rules for the

   Administration of the ECEA (2008/2016).

   a) Implement gifted education student programs providing programming options
      and services for gifted children for at least the number of days calendared for
      the school year by each school district.
   b) Affective programming should be provided to
      i) Assist gifted students in understanding themselves as gifted learners, and
         the implications of their abilities, talents, and potential for
         accomplishment (intrapersonal skills)
2. Assist gifted students in developing and/or refining interpersonal skills. (Rules for
   the Administration of the ECEA 2008/2016).

a) "Gifted Education Services" or "Gifted Education Programs" should include "evidence-based practices, such as … affective guidance."

b) The district's program plan shall include,

   i) Affective and guidance support systems (e.g., social skills training, early college and career planning)
   ii) Methods by which student affective growth is monitored and measured for continual development (e.g., rubrics for personal journals and anecdotal data, student surveys, demonstration of self-advocacy, and student career and/or college plans).

3. Shall also indicate the content of and means by which the [district] supports the acquisition and/or improvement of the knowledge and competencies of personnel through appropriate professional development relating to the instruction, programming and counseling for gifted students. Key topics should include, but need not be limited to, gifted characteristics and myths, differentiated instruction, affective needs, counseling, content instructional options and advanced curricular strategies (e.g., higher order thinking strategies). (Rules for the Administration of the ECEA 2008/2016).

4. If The District chooses to implement systemic SEL curricula, following the CASEL Report and Recommendations, the recommendation is that they also include specific affective programming for identified gifted students based on best practices as suggested in the state recommendations and NAGC Standards (Johnsen, 2012). They should also utilize the evaluation rubric created in this study.

5. Affective ALP goals are created which are attainable and measurable, follow ECEA Rules, and that "Affective goals reflect development of personal, social, communication, leadership, and/or cultural competency." Teacher, student and parent implementation, monitoring, and end-of-year goal evaluation include affective goals and follow best practices.

6. Personnel working with gifted students

    a) "Personnel involved in ALP development, and in progress report meetings or conferences, including, but not limited to classroom teacher(s), student, parents, gifted education staff or staff with training in gifted education identification and programming, and support staff as appropriate."

    b) "Personnel assigned with the responsibility for development and monitoring. At minimum the student's parents and classroom teachers should be familiar with and support ALP goals, and/or write ALP measurable goals according to local procedures. Gifted education resource personnel may assist in the writing of goals but may not be the sole custodian of the ALP. Goals are written and aligned with classroom tiered instruction and expanded learning opportunities for supplemental or intensive programming."

    c) "The program plan shall describe the personnel who provide instruction, counseling, coordination and other programming for gifted students. Personnel shall be knowledgeable in the characteristics, differentiated instructional methods and competencies in the special education of gifted students. Qualified personnel with endorsement or an advanced degree in gifted education are preferred in specific programs and classrooms consisting of mainly gifted students."

    d) Districts "should consider employing sufficient personnel for ALP writing and monitoring and differentiated instruction for gifted students."

7. "Professional development activities [shall occur], the purposes of which are:

a) To improve and enhance the skills, knowledge and expertise of teachers and other personnel who provide instruction and other supportive services to gifted students."

b) "To increase, to the extent practicable, the number of qualified personnel providing instruction to gifted students."

c) "The program plan shall also indicate the content of and means by which the [district] supports the acquisition and/or improvement of the knowledge and competencies of personnel through appropriate professional development relating to the instruction, programming and counseling for gifted students. Key topics should include, but need not be limited to, gifted characteristics and myths, differentiated instruction, affective needs, counseling, content instructional options and advanced curricular strategies (e.g., higher order thinking strategies)."

8. Recommendations for hiring practices to seek new teachers, counselors, and administrators who have at least some course work in the nature and needs of gifted learners. This provision would allow for building capacity within the district for teachers who are aware of the social emotional developmental needs of gifted learners in addition to strategies and effective practices for advancing their academic growth.

In addition to recommending following rules related to the ECEA, recommendations are also given for following the NAGC Standards (Johnsen, 2012)

related to the social and emotional development of gifted learners found in Appendix L and the NAGC Teacher Preparation Standards found in Appendix M.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Many of the policy recommendations from the ECEA Rules also pertain to recommendations for practice. The rationale and purpose of this study was to inform district stakeholders related to any type of general adoption of SEL programming, and those programs could be more effective for its gifted students. Stakeholders include district leadership, policy-makers, curriculum directors, school level administrators, teachers, and parents. Following are a variety of suggestions for improving the practice of supporting gifted students' social and emotional development.

Working with CASEL to undergo an SEL readiness and engagement analysis (Appendix O) was a big step for The District to make. This step showed and acknowledgment that SEL should be intertwined with academic instruction. However, even though this study looked at initial SEL programming and its efficacy for gifted students, there still needs to be a district-wide movement towards meeting the cognitive growth needs of its identified gifted population, 15% of its student population (2016-2017 school year).

A primary recommendation is for The District to ensure that appropriate academic challenges are provided for gifted students beginning in the primary grades all the way through high school (Neihart, 2017, VanTassel-Baska, 2009, 2010, 2012a, 2012b). Again, Neihart's (2017) Guiding Principles for designing social emotional programming for gifted learners are: (1) curricular challenge and interactions with peers of similar

abilities, interests, and drive is essential (true peers) (2) a variety of options should be available for meeting these needs, i.e. differentiation of individual, small group, family, online, focus groups, electronic, and face-to-face programming and accommodations, (3) programming must be based on empirical evidence, systematically and purposively created (p. 123).  It is also important that all stakeholders be involved in determining which policies and practices, backed by empirical data, are best employed for meeting these learners' needs.

The literature review also found much support for ensuring that gifted learners spend time with their intellectual peers, not just for academic instruction but also for activities in which they will be learning about social emotional skills related to their unique needs. The theoretical framework for this study, Bandura's (2006) SCT, has cognitive learning at its core. In order for gifted learners to get the most out of their learning opportunities, it is important that they spend time with like-minded peers during peer-to-peer interactions, allowing appropriate vicarious learning to take place (Burney, 2008). This recommendation is also supported by the gifted standards provided by the NAGC, the expertise of Robinson et al. (2007) in their *Best Practices in Gifted Education*, and Eckert and Robins' (2017) *Designing Services and Programs for High-Ability Learners (2nd ed.)*.

Other recommendations for practice include supporting teacher knowledge related to the needs of gifted learners. Based on the results of the interviews, it would be important to put more emphasis on teacher education related to the nature and needs of their gifted students. Without gifted specialists in each building, and with no

homogenously grouped gifted classrooms, teachers responsible for their students' ALPs

need to have at least a baseline amount of information related to gifted education.

PD must be available and required in order to meet the social emotional needs of

gifted students. If any of the recommendations made via the CASEL report are

implemented, there must be specific teacher instruction and support for meeting the needs

of gifted learners. Teachers should also be encouraged to take at least one district offered

course on the basics of working with gifted learners. This could be a type of Gifted 101

course. Creating professional learning communities (PLCs) within buildings would be

another way for teachers to learn about and support each other in meeting the affective

needs of their gifted students. This could be a means to create an informal coaching

network to improve instructional practices. These groups could also collaborate to rework

existing curriculum by including and integrating SEL content in all content areas. With

teacher and principal evaluations in The District having several standards for which this

training and its use would be measured, this would be a proactive way to support teachers

in their growth for meeting the needs of *all* students in their classrooms.

Another recommendation for practice includes the creation of opportunities for

family, group, and individual social emotional counseling support as suggested by

Robinson et al. (2007). If individual, in-school counseling support is needed, a school

counselor with a background in giftedness is essential. Small group, gifted specific

counseling is also recommended. Peterson and Lorimer's (2012) research supports this

practice for affective counseling particularly for $5^{th}$ – $8^{th}$ grade students. Counselor and

teacher teams who are knowledgeable in the social and emotional needs of gifted students

can lead discussion groups. Peterson, Betts, and Bradley (2009) outline the design and implementation practices for just such groups. Book studies can be the focal point of groups, reading and discussing resources such as *Fighting Invisible Tigers* (Hipp, 1995), *The Survival Guide for Gifted Kids* (Galbraith, 2013), *101 Success Secrets for Gifted Kids* (Fonseca, 2011), and *The Gifted Teen Survival Guide: Smart, Sharp, and Ready for (Almost) Anything* (Galbraith & Delisle, 2011).

Another recommendation is for The District to set up a task force to look at how effectively it is meeting the academic needs of its gifted students. Continuing to follow the recommendations from the CASEL evaluation with the CDE Guidelines for the social emotional needs of gifted learners, as well as the provisions from the ECEA as mentioned above, are also recommendations from this study. Including SEL programming for all students while also making strides to ensure gifted and talented students' academic needs are met would be a very effective mix for ensuring success for all students. If the SEL programming is going to be uniform across The District, a recommendation would be that the SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017) be used to find a curriculum that contains support for the gifted learners, and to modify, make accommodations, supplement the curriculum, or provide different opportunities based on the gifted learner's individualized social and emotional needs. Looking for a curriculum or program based on EI (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004) would support typical students and could easily be modified for their gifted classmates. Ideally, SEL curriculum would not be stand-alone, but would be integrated into all content areas, with an emphasis on understanding how social emotional learning competencies play out in curricular areas such as language arts, social studies

and science. CASEL's five areas of core competency would serve to support this integration of content and SEL skills (CASEL, n.d.).

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Possible areas for further research and investigation include modification of this study's methodology. Adding classroom observation and the collection and analysis of student artifacts from SEL lessons, interviewing students, interviewing parents, creating focus groups of teachers using the curricula, including teacher journals, and pre- and post-tests of teachers, students, or both groups are some of the ways this study could be changed. Including more grade levels at each school and adding additional schools and curricula are some other ideas for recommended further research. Creating a study in which focus groups of district curriculum decision-makers use the Rubric and gathering their feedback would add a practical aspect to its use and allow for changes from the end-user's point of view. Future research into gifted middle and high school students' support for their social and emotional developmental needs might usefully focus future studies on other contexts. One avenue for further study would be research into the specific SEL programming for twice exceptional gifted learners. Without further research into ways to support gifted students' social and emotional developmental needs, it will not be possible to ensure their growth and maximize their full potential.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this intrinsic qualitative case study was to explore the efficacy of universal SEL curricula for serving gifted students' social and emotional developmental needs in a large school district in a western state. Specific research questions guided the

research and data was collected to address them. The researcher was seeking to find out what characteristics of gifted learners were addressed by universal social and emotional learning curricula. Teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of universal SEL curricula being employed in their heterogeneously grouped classrooms was also investigated. Finally, using the Rubric created through extensive research on best practices for developing the social and emotional growth of gifted learners, the researcher searched for data to show whether universal social and emotional curricula was effective for gifted learners.

In this case, where there was no systemic social and emotional programming support, the researcher set out to determine the amount of efficacy a universal SEL curriculum would have for the unique needs of gifted learners. The assertions made by the researcher in this study were based on the four themes that emerged from the data analysis. As Nolen and Talbert (2011) stress, qualitative researchers must also be immersed inside a world of philosophical and theoretical assertions. This study took place inside the theoretical framework foundation provided by Bandura's SCT and the constructivist approach from both Piaget and Vygotsky. In addition to this foundation, the theoretical framework also included other theorists upon whose work affective education is based. These other theorists included Maslow (Moon, 2009; Roeper, 1993), Krathwohl (Cavilla, 2016; VanTassel-Baska, 1994), Erickson and Kohlberg's stages of moral development (Ferguson, 2006; Moon, 2009), and Dabrowski (Grant & Piechowski, 1999; Mendaglio & Tillier, 2006; Piechowski, 2014, 2017).

"The social and emotional development of students with gifts and talents lasts a lifetime. We have learned about how to help them develop during their school-age years

and with this newfound knowledge have corresponding responsibility to act" (Cross, 2009, p. 65). This qualitative case study explored the phenomenon of using universal SEL curricula for meeting the unique needs of gifted learners. The theoretical framework proposed that social emotional learning, like academic learning, takes place in a social environment where teachers and students interact with the curriculum and each other to make meaning of the topics being explored. Social, emotional, and intellectual development take place within a system that is today's classroom. The literature implied that SEL alone, when used with all students in a classroom, would increase the academic achievement of all students, with no regard for differences in social and emotional needs. According to the five participants interviewed in this study, not all social and emotional needs can be met using any one particular curriculum. In other words, one size *does not* fit all. While themes varied as to the contributions each made to the efficacy of universal SEL curriculum for meeting the social and emotional developmental needs for gifted learners, the underlying assertions based on the data in this research study were given. Chapter Five concludes this research study. The findings produced five assertions that revealed, (1) the atypical social and emotional needs for gifted children, (2) the limits of universal SEL program contents for providing gifted learners needed social and emotional supports, (3) the variation in teachers' knowledge about the nature and needs of their gifted students, (4) the need for differentiation of social emotional learning in addition to that of academics, and (5) that there is support at the district, state, and national levels for meeting the needs of high achieving students and their social and emotional needs.

Recommendations suggest that before decisions are made about the use of universal SEL curricula in the district in this study, teachers be given more information on the nature and needs of gifted learners, assurances are made to ensure that gifted students are being given appropriate challenges in academics, and are given opportunities to interact with "true peers". Teachers will need to know where to differentiate the SEL curricula for their gifted learners and individual schools will be able to assess gifted learners' social and emotional needs in order to provide them needed support. The findings of this study do not support the use of universal curricula for meeting the social and emotional developmental needs of gifted learners.

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**University of Denver**
**Consent Form for Participation in Research**

**Title of Research Study: Exploring the Efficacy of Universal Social Emotional Learning for Gifted Students: A Tool for Analyzing Curriculum**

**Researcher:** Lisa Turner, M.A., Doctoral student, University of Denver

<u>**Study Site:**</u> Boulder Valley School District

<u>**Purpose**</u>
You are being asked to participate in a research study whose purpose is to support teachers in deepening their understanding of the social emotional needs of their gifted students in order to aid in modifying and differentiating universal social emotional learning curricula for gifted students.

<u>**Procedures**</u>
If you participate in this research study, you have already contacted me to set up a time and location for our interview. The location will be your decision – either on-site at your school or another location in which you will feel comfortable or that affords privacy. I will go over a hard copy of this document and answer any questions you may have. Upon signing and agreeing to participate in this study, we will then begin the interview portion of our meeting. The interview will last approximately thirty to forty-five minutes. There will be questions about your teaching background and then specific questions related to the social emotional learning curriculum you are using as it relates to the identified gifted and talented students in your class. By signing this form, you are giving me permission to record the interview with a hand-held recording device for later transcription. If you are unable to meet face-to-face, there will also be an option to take part in an email interview, using private email addresses. I will be taking field notes to help with my analysis of the transcription. Recordings will be transcribed and destroyed after transcription. Transcripts will then be analyzed for themes and common ideas. There will be several other educators interviewed for this research.

<u>**Voluntary Participation**</u>
Participating in this research study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to be interviewed for any reason without penalty. There are no consequences if you choose not to participate.

<u>**Risks or Discomforts**</u>
Potential risks and/or discomforts of participation may include speaking candidly about your instructional beliefs, objectives and practices in the interview. Otherwise, there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts beyond what would normally be encountered in daily

instructional practices. The study may involve risks to participants that are currently unforeseeable.

**Benefits**
Possible benefits of participation include a greater understanding of the social emotional curricula being used by educators in addition to increased awareness of the specific social emotional needs of identified gifted students. There may be a chance that conclusions from this study will contribute classroom perspective as related to the social emotional learning of gifted and talented students in future [The District] policies and practices.

**Incentives to participate**
You will not receive any tangible compensation for participating in this research project.

**Confidentiality**
The researcher will use pseudonyms and bracket from use any other specific identifying details from the interview transcripts to keep your information safe throughout this study. If permission is granted for audio recordings of interviews, they will be stored on an encrypted device and destroyed after transcription. Your individual identity will be kept private when information is presented or published about this study.

A handheld recording device will be used to record the interviews, downloaded in MP3 format and secured in a password protected folder on the researcher's computer. Full transcripts of your interview responses and data collected during instructional observations will not be shared with anyone. Interviews will be analyzed using a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, such as Dedoose. Excerpts of data may be used in presentations and published articles or essays. All data will be presented with pseudonyms if names are needed for sharing. You may request the opportunity to read the transcripts of your interview, if you choose. We can schedule a time during which you may read through and make any comments necessary.

During the study, you will be updated about any new information that may affect whether you are willing to continue taking part in the study. If new information is learned that may affect you, you will be contacted directly and in a timely manner.

The research records are held by researchers at an academic institution; therefore, the records may be subject to disclosure if required by law. The research information may be shared with federal agencies or local committees who are responsible for protecting research participants, including individuals on behalf of the University of Denver.

**Questions**
If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to contact Lisa Turner at lisa.turner@du.edu 303 902-0368 at any time. University of Denver faculty sponsor: Dr. Norma Hafenstein norma.hafenstein@du.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researcher.

---

**In order to Participate**     Please initial below:

___The researcher may audio record me during this study.

___ I would like to participate in email format rather than a face-to-face recorded interview.

---

**Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.**

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below.  You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____          _____

**Participant Signature**                                 **Date**


_____          _____

**Researcher Signature**                                   **Date**

---

# Appendix B – Recruitment Letter

Dear _____

My name is Lisa Turner. I am a veteran middle school teacher in The District and am currently working on doctoral level research at the University of Denver.  My faculty chair is Dr. Norma Hafenstein at the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver. For any questions you may have, you can reach me at lisa.turner@bvsd.org, 303 902-0368 and Dr. Hafenstein at norma.hafenstein@du.edu or 303 871-2527.

I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the social emotional learning curriculum used with gifted and talented students in The District. You were invited to be in this study because your principal has given me permission to ask you, you are using some type of social emotional curriculum with your classroom, have been using it for over one school year and have identified gifted and talented students in your classroom. I obtained your contact information from ████████████████████████████ for The District.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to look at different types of social emotional curricula that teachers in The District are using. The research will also note how this curriculum is being used to establish positive learning environments for gifted students, and to find out what you believe about the inclusion of social emotional learning in your class.

The study began in October and data will be collected until the end of April. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later, and you may stop at any time without any consequences. You may skip questions that you feel are too personal. There are no direct benefits to you from being in this study, and there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in this study. There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** All information you provide will be kept confidential and locked in the researcher's file cabinet and password protected computers. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of the research project. In addition, your name and anything else that could identify you will not be included in any reports of the study. After five years, all the information will be destroyed.

Thank you so much for considering being a part of this important work!

**Appendix C – Teacher Interview Protocol**

Post curriculum usage interviews will be conducted with one teacher from each school, who each employed a different commercially produced universal social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. These interviews' purpose is to determine these teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the curricula they are using for the gifted and talented students in their classrooms.

The semi-structured interviews will begin with some specific questions about the teachers' backgrounds as educators. Then open-ended questions will follow that focus on the general efficacy of the curriculum as well as their perceptions of its efficacy with gifted students.

Introduction: I am Lisa Turner and I am studying the efficacy of using universal (designed to be used with *all* students) social emotional learning curricula with gifted students. I have been in an EdD cohort since the summer of 2013 and this is the final portion of my work towards my doctorate. This interview is part of a descriptive case study in which I will be describing three different social emotional curricula being used in our district at this time. Let me go over the informed consent form with you before we get started.

**Background Questions**

1. Tell me about your background.
2. Tell me about your teaching experience.
3. What experiences have you had with social emotional learning curricula?
4. Describe the curriculum you are using this year.

**Teacher Perception Questions**

5. Please tell me about what you consider the overall strengths of the curriculum you are using?
6. What changes or suggestions would you recommend making to the curriculum you are using more efficacious overall?
7. In what ways do you think it provides challenges for your gifted students?
8. How is it effective with your gifted students?
9. What would you change about this curriculum to make it more supportive of your gifted students' social and emotional development?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your gifted students OR the curriculum?

**Conclusion:** Let me be sure that you have my contact information in case you have any additional questions. There is a chance that I may need to contact you for some clarifying information or perhaps to ask additional questions, or for your input as to the findings I surmise.

**Appendix D – Interview Questions Rationale and Citations**

| Question | Rationale | Citation |
|---|---|---|
| **Background Questions** | | |
| 1.Tell me about your teaching experience. | Warming up interviewees and building trust with them | Jacob & Ferguson, 2012 |
| 2.What experiences have you had with social emotional learning curricula? | Open ended opportunity for finding out teachers' backgrounds in this topic. Opening for telling stories about their experience | Jacob & Ferguson (2012) Melon (1998) |
| 3.Describe the curriculum you are using this year. | Warm-up question – open-ended yet can be answered | Strategies for qualitative interviews (Harvard Sociology Dept.) |
| **Teacher Perception Questions** | | |
| 4.What do you like about the curriculum you are using? | Direct question – tapping into their experience | Strategies for qualitative interviews (Harvard Sociology Dept.) |
| 5.In what ways do you think it provided challenges for your gifted students? | Allowing research to guide the questioning and to explore teachers' backgrounds in GT | Jacob & Ferguson (2012) |
| 6.How is it effective with your gifted students? | Direct question – getting to the heart of the interview | Kvale (2005) |
| 7.What would you change about this curriculum to make it more supportive for your gifted students? | Indirect question allowing interviewee to project what they think is needed | Kvale (2005) |
| 8.Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your gifted students OR the curriculum | Final question to provide closure and to leave the interviewee feeling that they have been empowered and glad to have participated | Strategies for qualitative interviews (Harvard Sociology Dept.) |

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      Conducting Interviews: Tips for Students New to the Field of Qualitative

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      http://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/files/sociology/files/interview_strategies.pdf

# Appendix E – Administrator Consent Form

**University of Denver**
**Consent Form for Participation in Research**
**Title of Research Study: Exploring the Efficacy of Universal Social Emotional Learning for Gifted Students: A Tool for**
**Analyzing Curriculum**

**Researcher:** Lisa Turner, M.A., Doctoral student, University of Denver
**Study Site:** Cottonwood School District **(pseudonym)**

**Purpose**
You are being asked to participate in a research study whose purpose is to support teachers in deepening their understanding of the social emotional needs of their gifted students in order to aid in modifying and differentiating universal social emotional learning curricula for gifted students.

**Procedures**
If you participate in this interview portion of this research study, we will set up a time in which we can either do a phone or in person interview at the location of your choice. At the beginning of whichever type of interview, I will go over a copy of this document and answer any questions you may have. Upon signing electronically or in person and agreeing to participate in this study, we will then begin the interview portion of our meeting. The interview will last approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. There will be questions about your educational background and then specific questions related to social emotional learning and supporting the needs of gifted students' social and emotional development. By signing this form, you are giving me permission to record the interview using an iPhone app for later transcription. I will be taking field notes to help with my analysis of the transcription. Recordings will be transcribed and destroyed after transcription. Transcripts will then be analyzed for themes and common ideas. There will be one other district administrator interviewed for this portion of the research.

**Voluntary Participation**
Participating in this research study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to be interviewed for any reason without penalty. There are no consequences if you choose not to participate.

**Risks or Discomforts**
Potential risks and/or discomforts of participation may include speaking candidly about your instructional beliefs, objectives and practices in the interview. Otherwise, there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts beyond what would normally be encountered in daily administrative practices. The study may involve risks to participants that are currently unforeseeable.

**Benefits**
Possible benefits of participation include a greater understanding of the social emotional aspects of district programming to increased awareness of the specific social emotional needs of identified gifted students. There may be a chance that conclusions from this study will contribute related to policies related to the social emotional learning of gifted and talented students in future school district policies and practices.

**Incentives to participate**
You will not receive any tangible compensation for participating in this research project.

**Confidentiality**
The researcher will use pseudonyms and bracket from use any other specific identifying details from the interview transcripts to keep your information safe throughout this study. If permission is granted for audio recordings of interviews, they will be stored on an encrypted device and destroyed after transcription. Your individual identity will be kept private when information is presented or published about this study.
An iPhone and app will be used to record the interviews, downloaded in MP3 format and secured in a password protected folder on the researcher's computer. Full transcripts of your interview responses will not be shared with anyone. Excerpts of data may be used in presentations and published articles or essays.  All data will be presented with pseudonyms if names are needed for sharing. You may request the opportunity to read the transcripts of your interview, if you choose. We can schedule a time during which you may read through and make any comments necessary.
During the study, you will be updated about any new information that may affect whether you are willing to continue taking part in the study. If new information is learned that may affect you, you will be contacted directly and in a timely manner.
The research records are held by researchers at an academic institution; therefore, the records may be subject to disclosure if required by law. The research information may be shared with federal agencies or local committees who are responsible for protecting research participants, including individuals on behalf of the University of Denver.
**Questions**
If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to contact Lisa Turner at lisa.turner@du.edu 303 902-0368 at any time. University of Denver faculty sponsor: Dr. Norma Hafenstein norma.hafenstein@du.edu.
If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researcher.

---

**In order to Participate**    Please initial below:

\_\_\_The researcher may audio record me during this study.

\_\_\_ I would like to participate in email format rather than a recorded phone interview.

---

**Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.**
If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below.  You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____       _____
**Participant Signature**         **Date**
_____       _____

| Researcher Signature | Date |
| --- | --- |

**Appendix F – Interview Protocol for District Administrators**

**Introduction:** Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. As you know, I am in a doctoral program at the University of Denver, working on a research project related to gifted students and social emotional learning programs. I am exploring the relationship of the use of universal social emotional learning curricula with gifted students in this school district.

This interview is designed to take only about 15 minutes. It will be recorded for later transcription for my use only, and I will also be taking some written notes while we speak. Answers to these questions will be kept confidential, and no quotes will be attributed to you by name or position. With your permission, your name will only be listed in this doctoral research project write-up as a participant. There are no wrong or right answers, and feel free to decline to answer any questions you choose not respond to. You may also add additional information that you think I might need to know. I will begin by asking questions related to your position in the school district first, and then continue to ask more specific questions about the district's programming for gifted learners.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Background Questions:**
1. Tell me about your background in education.
2. Briefly describe your current role in the district.
3. Tell me about how this role relates to developing social emotional skills in students.

**District Position Questions:**
4. How does The District address the needs of identified gifted and talented students?
5. How does The District address social emotional learning?
6. How does The District address the social and emotional needs of gifted students?
7. What needs to you see in the area of social emotional needs of gifted students?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me related to social emotional learning and/or the social emotional needs of gifted and talented students in the district?

# Appendix G – Community Partnership Agreement

**Boulder Valley**
School District
*Excellence and Equity*
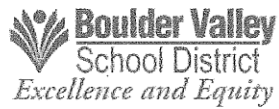
Partnership Agreement

September 12, 2016

To Whom it May Concern:

I agree to work with Lisa Turner as the liaison and community partner for her EdD work

at the University of Denver. I will support her dissertation work and be the liaison for the

Boulder Valley School District during this process.

Signed:

_____

**Andy Tucker**
Director of Student Support
AVID District Director
6500 E. Arapahoe Road
**Boulder, CO 80303**
(720) 561-5914 **(office)**
(720) 583-5914 **(cell)**

_____

Lisa Turner
Doctoral Candidate
720 561-8081 (office)
303 902-0368 (cell)

# Appendix H – Permission for Research Document

REQUEST TO DO EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
## BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT
### Office of Student Assessment & Program Evaluation
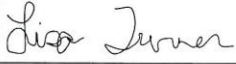
BACKGROUND

| | |
|---|---|
| Date: | **March 27, 2017** |
| Name of Applicant: | **Lisa Turner** |
| Email Address: | **lisa.turner@bvsd.org** |
| Phone: | **hm: 303 665-7685;  wk.: 720 561-8081; cell: 303 902-0368** |
| Description: (Title of the research project) | **Exploring the Efficacy of Universal SEL for Gifted Students: A Tool for Analyzing Curricula** |

## AGREEMENT

If granted permission to conduct this research project in the Boulder Valley School District, I (we) agree to the following conditions:

1. The conduct of the research study will be consistent with the district's policy procedures and will follow the approved educational research design.
2. Persons and places used in the project will remain anonymous except by prior approval.
3. Any modifications of the approved plan will be submitted for approval in advance to Student Assessment & Program Evaluation.
4. Results will be submitted to your assigned District Liaison.
5. All project data collected at the participant level within the Boulder Valley School District will be destroyed within five years of the project completion.

| **Lisa Turner** | *Lisa Turner* | 3/27/17 |
|---|---|---|
| Name of Research Applicant(s) | Signature(s) of Research Applicant(s) | Date |
| **Dr. Norma Hafenstein** | | 3-24-17 |
| Name of Person Supervising Project | Signature of Person Supervising Project | Date |

NOTE: An e-signature is recognized if all parties named on this agreement are copied on the email when the proposal is submitted.

By submitting a full research proposal, all parties that signed this page are in agreement with the aforementioned statements.

## PROCEDURES FOR SUBMISSION

This page must be completed and returned to the Office of Student Assessment & Program Evaluation with all required documentation. Please submit a full proposal that follows the "Guidelines for Proposals to Do Research in the Boulder Valley School District" (page 2).

Be sure to identify the submission deadline you will aim for that aligns to your intended date to start research. Review cycles are provided on page 4, under "Review Dates."

For more information about the approval process, refer to this flowchart (addendum A) that outlines the district's research review process.

**Appendix I – Email Introduction Seeking Teachers for Samples**

If you are using a social emotional curriculum with your class, have used it for most of one school year (this one or more) and teach identified gifted students, I need your help! All I need is one person from your building to interview, you name the time and place, for 30-45 minutes. This is a quick turnaround, as my goal is to complete the interview by Monday, 4/10. My project has been approved by the district. Following is the official recruitment letter. Thanks so much for considering giving me your input for my doctoral research project!!!

**Appendix J – Request for Expert Feedback**

Dear Dr. _____:

I am a doctoral student from the University of Denver writing my Doctoral Research Project entitled "Examining Social Emotional Learning for Gifted Students", under the direction of my DRP committee chaired by Dr. Norma Hafenstein. I am writing you to ask for your help in giving me your professional opinion and feedback related to the content and the structure of a rubric that I am planning to use for my work.

In my research I have been investigating commercially developed universal social emotional learning (SEL) curricula. Through an extensive review of the literature, which included reading and rereading many different studies, articles, books, and other sources, I have created a rubric with which districts, programs or schools could use to analyze and evaluate universal SEL. In many schools and districts, as you know, gifted students often spend most of their time in heterogeneously grouped classrooms. My research focuses on investigating the effectiveness of these universal curricula for supporting the social emotional developmental needs of gifted learners. The rubric I have created will give decision-makers reference points for three different elements of any given curriculum. Each element; psychosocial, activity and process content, and the curriculum structure itself, contains research supported components gleaned from the literature on the social emotional development of gifted students. The rubric has been designed to help determine which curriculum would offer the most cogency for supporting gifted learners.

You have been chosen because of your expertise in the field of both giftedness and psychosocial development. I am hopeful that you, as an expert in the social emotional development of gifted students, will be able to look at the rubric I have created and give your opinion and feedback as to its content and structure. I am hopeful that you will have time to complete this by August 4th. I understand that this time frame may not work into your schedule, so I ask that you let me as soon as possible, if you will be unable to give feedback on my rubric. Thanks so much for your consideration of my request! Feel free to check out my portfolio on the University of Denver website for more information about me: http://portfolio.du.edu/lturner6

Sincerely,
Lisa D.B. Turner
Doctoral Candidate
Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver

**Appendix K – Social Emotional Learning for Exceptional Children's Thinking and Emotional Development (SELECTED) Rubric™ (2017)**

| Category | Sub-Category | Not Mentioned (0) | Little Mention (1) | Well-Covered (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Asynchronous Development** | Mention of, or appreciation for an uneven rate of development in cognitive, affective and physical domains | | | | |
| | Focus on teaching the whole child – "mind, heart, spirit, social aspects" (Gatto-Walden, 2016, p. 23) | | | | |
| **Emotional Intelligence** | Identification of emotions in others | | | | |
| | Accurate expression of emotions and needs associated with those | | | | |
| | Provides a distinction between the difference between accurate and honest emotions | | | | |
| | Focus on intrinsic motivation | | | | |
| | Lessons include learning about empathy | | | | |
| **Feelings of Being Different Addressed** | Offer a variety of grouping strategies | | | | |
| | Provide a variety of opportunities for social interaction | | | | |
| | "Unique" or atypical characteristics mentioned and supported | | | | |
| | Create safe spaces for all types of students | | | | |
| | Give opportunities for creating a variety of adult support systems | | | | |

| Category | Sub-Category | Not Mentioned (0) | Little Mention (1) | Well-Covered (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Interpersonal Communication** | **Strategies for communication with peers** | | | | |
| | **Communication with parents & family relationships** | | | | |
| | **Strategies for emphasizing self-advocacy, self-efficacy and conflict management** | | | | |
| | **Strategies to assist in appreciation of gender differences** | | | | |
| **Introspective Focus Self-Actualization Development of positive intrapersonal skills** | **Self-assessment** | | | | |
| | **Self-esteem** | | | | |
| | **Self-regulation** | | | | |
| | **Aspects for self-knowledge related to identity** | | | | |
| | **Self-knowledge regarding interests related to student strengths** | | | | |
| | **Opportunities given to identify self-beliefs and moral reasoning** | | | | |
| **Overexcitabilities** | **Heightened intellectual intensity** – intensity and accelerated mental activity, questioning, seeking answers | | | | |
| | **Emotional intensity** – extremes of feeling, inhibition, affective memory, anxieties, fear, guilt, depression | | | | |
| | **Psychomotor Intensity** – heightened physical response to stimuli, confident and aware of bodily movement | | | | |
| | **Heightened response to sensory input** – intense reactions to sights, sounds, tastes, textures, smells, etc. | | | | |
| | **Imaginational Intensity** – vivid imagination, interest in creative endeavors (i.e. fantasy, metaphors, storytelling, science fiction) | | | | |

| Category | Sub-Category | Not Mentioned (0) | Little Mention (1) | Well-Covered (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Perfectionism** <br> A distinction is made between striving for excellence, versus seeking perfection. | Addressing negative issues such as fear of failure | | | | |
| | Promoting/supporting making mistakes | | | | |
| | Ensuring challenge for all | | | | |
| | Positive self-talk | | | | |
| **Wellness/Mindfulness Stress Management** <br> Lessons on stress reduction, wellness and mindfulness strategies are included in the curriculum. These may include: | Being conscious and aware of the present moment | | | | |
| | Using breathing and focus to encourage calmness in feelings, thoughts & physical sensations. | | | | |
| | Strategies for coping with stress | | | | |
| | A regular systematic course of mindfulness activities | | | | |
| **Risk-taking** <br> Lessons are framed to encourage students to be willing to make mistakes. | Growth mindset focus (Dweck, 2006) | | | | |
| | Acceptance and learning opportunities from social mistakes | | | | |
| | Acceptance and learning opportunities from academic mistakes | | | | |
| | Provides physical and emotional space for students to work | | | | |
| | Gives opportunity for choice in activities, process and products | | | | |
| | Provides support for taking chances academically, socially and emotionally | | | | |

| Category | Sub-Category | Not Mentioned (0) | Little Mention (1) | Well-Covered (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Talent Development** **Topics of academic and career planning are included** | **Activities involve leadership opportunities** | | | | |
| | **Career opportunities are included in lesson activities** | | | | |
| | **College and career choices are discussed** | | | | |
| | **Opportunities for guest speakers and expert opinions (i.e. TED Talks, community involvement)** | | | | |
| **Counseling Referral Guidelines** **Curriculum gives information to instructors about when issues surfacing during lessons should be referred to counseling.** | **Referral suggestions include school counseling services** | | | | |
| | **Referral suggestions include private counseling services** | | | | |
| | **Counseling options discussed are specific to gifted** | | | | |
| | **Suggestions are made for preventative counseling** | | | | |
| | **Group and one-to-one counseling options are suggested** | | | | |
| | **Professional testing for determination of learning disabilities or gifted identification are mentioned** | | | | |
| | **Referral suggestions include school counseling services** | | | | |
| | **Holistic Score: Total the number of checks in each category – mode of checklist items (Muskal & Laydens, 2000)** | | | | |

**General Comments:**


**Strength Areas:**

**Weak Areas:**

**Rubric References**

**Asynchronous Development**
Chelin, 2015; Johnsen, 2012; Morelock, 1992; Neihart,1999; Pfeiffer & Cross, 2016; Reis & Renzulli, 2004; Silverman, 1993; Roeper, 1995; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2010; Webb, 1994.

**Emotional Intelligence**
Hébert, 2012; Johnsen, 2012; Lovecky, 1992; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2010.

**Feelings of Being Different Addressed**
Cross, 2011; Johnsen, 2012; Lovecky, 1992; Reis & Renzulli, 2004; Rogers, 2002; Silverman, 2000; Webb et al., 2007; Wood, 2010; Zeidner & Matthews, 2017.

**Interpersonal Communication**
Betts & Neihart, 1985; Betts, 2016; J. Cross, 2016; Chelin, 2015; Cross, 2005; Freeman & Garces-Bascal, 2016; Dixson, Worrell, 2016; Subotnik, Worrell, Olszewski-Kibilius, 2016; Galbraith & Delisle, 2011; Hébert, 2012; Lovecky, 1992; Neihart, 1999, 2006; Rimm, 1997; Stewart & Comallie-Caplan, 2013; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; Webb, 1994; Webb et al., 2007.

**Introspective Focus/Self-Actualization**
Betts & Neihart, 1985; Brackett et al., 2009; Delisle, 1992; Dixson &Worrell, 2016; Subotnik, Worrell, Olszewski-Kibilius, 2016; Greenspon, 1998; Hébert, 2012; Hollingworth, 1927; Liam & Chua, 2016; Lovecky, 1992; Neihart, 2006; Roeper, 1991; Silverman, 1996; VanTassel-Baska, 2009; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2010; VanTassel-Baska, 2012; Webb, 1996; Webb et al., 2007; Zeidner & Matthews, 2017.

**Overexcitabilities**
Chelin, 2015; Lovecky, 1992; Peterson, 2009; Piechowski, 2014, 2017; Silverman, 2000; Webb et al., 2007.

**Perfectionism**
Chan, 2012; Chelin, 2015; Dweck, 2006, 2012; Greenspon, 2000, 2012, 2016; Speirs Neumeister, 2016; Speirs Neumeister & Finch, 2006); Neihart, 2006, 2016; Peterson, 2009; Reis & Renzulli, 2004; Silverman, 2000; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2010; Webb, 1996; Webb et al., 2007.

**Risk-taking Opportunities**
Chelin, 2015; Cross, 2005; Delisle, 2011; Lovecky, 1992; Peterson, 2009; Silverman, 2000; Subotnik, Worrell & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2016; Webb, 1996.

**Talent Development**

Chelin, 2015; Delisle, 2002; Greene Burton, 2016; Lee, 2016; Neihart, 2006, 2016; Peterson, 2009; Reis & Renzulli, 2004; Rimm, 1997; Rogers, 2002; Silverman, 1996, 2000; Subotnik, Worrell & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2016; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2010; VanTassel-Baska, 2012; Webb, 1996.

**Wellness/Mindfulness Stress Management**
Chelin, 2015; Cross, 2005; Hébert, 2012; Neihart, 2006, 2016; Reis & Renzulli, 2004; Rogers, 2000; Silverman, 2000; Webb et al., 2007.

# Appendix L – NAGC Standards 1 and 4

## Standard 1:  Learning and Development

**Description:**  Educators, recognizing the learning and developmental differences of students with gifts and talents, promote ongoing self-understanding, awareness of their needs, and cognitive and affective growth of these students in school, home, and community settings to ensure specific student outcomes.

| Student Outcomes | Evidence-Based Practices |
|---|---|
| *1.1. Self-Understanding.* Students with gifts and talents demonstrate self-knowledge with respect to their interests, strengths, identities, and needs in socio-emotional development and in intellectual, academic, creative, leadership, and artistic domains. | 1.1.1. Educators engage students with gifts and talents in identifying interests, strengths, and gifts. |
| | 1.1.2. Educators assist students with gifts and talents in developing identities supportive of achievement. |
| 1.2. Self-Understanding. Students with gifts and talents possess a developmentally appropriate understanding of how they learn and grow; they recognize the influences of their beliefs, traditions, and values on their learning and behavior. | 1.2.1. Educators develop activities that match each student's developmental level and culture-based learning needs. |
| *1.3. Self-Understanding.* Students with gifts and talents demonstrate understanding of and respect for similarities and differences between themselves and their peer group and others in the general population. | 1.3.1. Educators provide a variety of research-based grouping practices for students with gifts and talents that allow them to interact with individuals of various gifts, talents, abilities, and strengths. |
| | 1.3.2. Educators model respect for individuals with diverse abilities, strengths, and goals. |
| *1.4. Awareness of Needs.* Students with gifts and talents access resources from the community to support cognitive and affective needs, including social interactions with others having similar interests and abilities or experiences, including same-age peers and mentors or experts. | 1.4.1. Educators provide role models (e.g., through mentors, bibliotherapy) for students with gifts and talents that match their abilities and interests. |
| | 1.4.2. Educators identify out-of-school learning opportunities that match students' abilities and interests. |
| *1.5. Awareness of Needs.* Students' families and communities understand similarities and differences with respect to the development and characteristics of advanced and typical learners and support students with gifts and talents' needs. | 1.5.1. Educators collaborate with families in accessing resources to develop their child's talents. |
| *1.6. Cognitive and Affective Growth.* Students with gifts and talents benefit from meaningful and challenging learning activities addressing their unique characteristics and needs. | 1.6.1. Educators design interventions for students to develop cognitive and affective growth that is based on research of effective practices. |
| | 1.6.2. Educators develop specialized intervention services for students with gifts and talents who are underachieving and are now learning and developing their talents. |
| *1.7. Cognitive and Affective Growth.* Students with gifts and talents recognize their preferred approaches to learning and expand their repertoire. | 1.7.1. Teachers enable students to identify their preferred approaches to learning, accommodate these preferences, and expand them. |
| *1.8. Cognitive and Affective Growth.* Students with gifts and talents identify future career goals that match their talents and abilities and resources needed to meet those goals (e.g., higher education opportunities, mentors, financial support). | 1.8.1. Educators provide students with college and career guidance that is consistent with their strengths. |
| | 1.8.2. Teachers and counselors implement a curriculum scope and sequence that contains person/social awareness and adjustment, academic planning, and vocational and career awareness. |

# Standard 4: Learning Environments

**Description:** Learning environments foster personal and social responsibility, multicultural competence, and interpersonal and technical communication skills for leadership in the 21$^{st}$ century to ensure specific student outcomes.

| Student Outcomes | Evidence-Based Practices |
|---|---|
| 4.1. *Personal Competence*. Students with gifts and talents demonstrate growth in personal competence and dispositions for exceptional academic and creative productivity. These include self-awareness, self-advocacy, self-efficacy, confidence, motivation, resilience, independence, curiosity, and risk taking. | 4.1.1. Educators maintain high expectations for all students with gifts and talents as evidenced in meaningful and challenging activities. |
| | 4.1.2. Educators provide opportunities for self-exploration, development and pursuit of interests, and development of identities supportive of achievement, e.g., through mentors and role models. |
| | 4.1.3. Educators create environments that support trust among diverse learners. |
| | 4.1.4. Educators provide feedback that focuses on effort, on evidence of potential to meet high standards, and on mistakes as learning opportunities. |
| | 4.1.5. Educators provide examples of positive coping skills and opportunities to apply them. |
| 4.2. *Social Competence*. Students with gifts and talents develop social competence manifested in positive peer relationships and social interactions. | 4.2.1. Educators understand the needs of students with gifts and talents for both solitude and social interaction. |
| | 4.2.2. Educators provide opportunities for interaction with intellectual and artistic/creative peers as well as with chronological-age peers. |
| | 4.2.3. Educators assess and provide instruction on social skills needed for school, community, and the world of work. |
| 4.3. *Leadership*. Students with gifts and talents demonstrate personal and social responsibility and leadership skills. | 4.3.1 Educators establish a safe and welcoming climate for addressing social issues and developing personal responsibility. |
| | 4.3.2. Educators provide environments for developing many forms of leadership and leadership skills. |
| | 4.3.3. Educators promote opportunities for leadership in community settings to effect positive change. |
| 4.4. *Cultural Competence*. Students with gifts and talents value their own and others' language, heritage, and circumstance. They possess skills in communicating, teaming, and collaborating with diverse individuals and across diverse groups.[1] They use positive strategies to address social issues, including discrimination and stereotyping. | 4.4.1. Educators model appreciation for and sensitivity to students' diverse backgrounds and languages. |
| | 4.4.2. Educators censure discriminatory language and behavior and model appropriate strategies. |
| | 4.4.3. Educators provide structured opportunities to collaborate with diverse peers on a common goal. |
| 4.5. *Communication Competence*. Students with gifts and talents develop competence in interpersonal and technical communication skills. They demonstrate advanced oral and written skills, balanced biliteracy or multiliteracy, and creative expression. They display fluency with technologies that support effective communication | 4.5.1. Educators provide opportunities for advanced development and maintenance of first and second language(s). |
| | 4.5.2. Educators provide resources to enhance oral, written, and artistic forms of communication, recognizing students' cultural context. |
| | 4.5.3. Educators ensure access to advanced communication tools, including assistive technologies, and use of these tools for expressing higher-level thinking and creative productivity. |

| **Standards for Preparation of Gifted Education Teachers Focusing on Social-Emotional Needs of Students** (VanTassel-Baska, 2009) | |
|---|---|
| Standard | Social-Emotional Knowledge and Skills |
| Standard 2: Development and Characteristics of Learners | K1: Cognitive and affective characteristics of individual with gifts and talents, including those from diverse backgrounds, in intellectual, academic creative, leadership and arts domains. |
| Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences | K2: Academic and affective characteristics and learning needs of individual with gifts and talents and disabilities. |
| Standard 5:  Learning Environments and Social Interaction | K2: Influence of social and emotional development on interpersonal relationships and learning of individuals with gifts and talents. |
| | S1: Design learning opportunities for individuals with gifts and talents that promote self-awareness, positive peer relationships, intercultural experiences and leadership. |
| | S2: Create learning environments for individuals with gifts and talents that promote self-awareness, self-efficacy, leadership and lifelong learning. |
| | S3: Create safe learning environments for individuals with gifts and talents that encourage active participation in individual and group activities to enhance independence, interdependence and positive peer relationships. |
| Standard 10: Collaboration | S4: Create learning environments and intercultural experiences that allow individuals with gifts and talents to appreciate their own and others language and cultural heritage. |
| | S5: Develop social interaction and coping skills in individuals with gifts and talents to address personal |

| | and social issues, including stereotyping and discrimination. |
| | |
| | S1: Respond to concerns of families of individuals with gifts and talents. |

Note: From NAGC and Council for Exceptional Children (2006, pp. 1-3, 5) (VanTassel-Baska, 2009)

## Appendix N – The District Vision, Mission

**The District Vision**

We develop our children's greatest abilities and make possible the discovery and pursuit of their dreams which, when fulfilled, will benefit us all. We provide a comprehensive and innovative approach to education and graduate successful, curious, lifelong learners who confidently confront the great challenges of their time.

**The District Mission**

The mission of the [The District] is to create challenging, meaningful and engaging learning opportunities so that all children thrive and are prepared for successful, civically engaged lives.

**Value Statements**

1. We respect the inherent value of each student and incorporate the strengths and diversity of students, families, staff and communities.

2. Societal inequities and unique learning needs will not be barriers to student success.

3. We address the intellectual growth, health and physical development, and social emotional well-being of students.

4. We value accountability and transparency at all levels.

**Goals and Strategies**

1. The District will partner with students, families, staff, and community members to address the unique learning needs of each student and to create meaningful and engaging opportunities for each child.

2. The District will ensure that each student meets or exceeds appropriate expectations relative to intellectual growth, physical development and social emotional well-being.

3. The District will ensure that students, families, staff, and community members experience a safe, healthy and inclusive environment.

The following strategies will be used to attain these goals:

a. The District will assess the success of each child as well as the overall effectiveness of the school system using multiple measures.

b. The District will partner with parents and the larger community to help all students enter school ready to learn and continue to learn throughout their educational experience.

c. The District will attract, hire and retain outstanding professionals at all levels of the organization.

d. The District will provide high quality professional development.

e. The District will increase community involvement, corporate partnerships, volunteer involvement, and legislative advocacy.

**Appendix O – CASEL Social Emotional Learning Readiness and Engagement Analysis**

| Topic | Strengths | Challenges | Short-Term Recommendations | Long-Term Recommendations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Budget and Staffing | Recent reorganization of district administration and staff | State budget cuts and lack of funding for elementary counselors | Hire an SEL Director<br><br>Allocate dedicated funding for systemic implementation<br><br>Hire elementary school counselors<br><br>Use community/ businesses to raise resources | Grow and support SEL Team and staff<br><br>Implement funding plan |
| Assess SEL resources and needs | Already have programs in some schools [including the samples in this study] | A variety of programs, not all cataloged and site-based management systems in place | Conduct a resource and needs assessment at school sites<br><br>Evaluate fidelity of current program usage<br><br>Use MTSS framework and state expectations to organize current resources and needs<br><br>Identify pilot schools | Continue assessment for needs and plan for implementation timelines and support |
| Create a vision and long-term plan for SEL | A strategic plan is already in place in addition to multi-year goals | Existing plans focus on students, no plan in place for adult SEL needs | Create a multi-year SEL implementation plan | Continue with plan, check progress and goals at district and school leadership levels |

| Topic | Strengths | Challenges | Short-Term Recommendations | Long-Term Recommendations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Communi-cate with stakeholders | Use the current system already in place to share district goals | | • District level leadership communicate SEL as a priority<br>• Use strategies already in place for sharing the strategic plan, including district website | • Continue with the communication plan<br>• Engage support from other district SEL advocates<br>• Share district's work across the state |
| Review and adopt SEL standards | Using Common Core State Standards<br><br>Compliments the current Educator Effectiveness Evaluation Program and new graduation requirements | | • Review existing SEL state standards for informing district, school leadership, educators using backwards design<br>• Create new or modify existing standards and adopt those | • Communicate and implement the SEL standards<br>• Integrate SEL standards with academic instruction |
| Design and Implement Professional Develop-ment | District has a new PD director and uses performance evaluations to | Limited time in the school calendar for district PD | • Assess district and school leadership's knowledge of SEL and design introductory activities<br>• SEL and PD directors work collaboratively to develop a PD plan<br>• Create PLC among principles to share best practices | • Plan SEL-specific PD at all levels throughout the district<br>• Expand SEL PD offerings at schools and integrate it into future district PD<br>• Offer SEL PD for credit for teachers |

| Topic | Strengths | Challenges | Short-Term Recommendations | Long-Term Recommendations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strengthen adult social and emotional competence/ expertise | Shared understanding that this is a valuable goal | Current levels of SEL lack adult focus | • Build district-wide expertise and capacity for understanding systemic SEL and modeling<br>• Invest time in adult SEL development beginning with district and school leaders | Continue focus on integrating SEL into current district priorities and classroom instruction |
| Integrate SEL | Current organizational structure supports and encourages inter-departmental collaboration and can support integration of SEL focus<br><br>MTSS implementation can help facilitate integration | Risk of initiative fatigue | • Identify initial ways to integrate SEL into other priorities and initiatives<br>• Use MTSS to facilitate SEL integration and use PBL as an instructional framework | Continue to focus on integrating SEL into existing district priorities and classroom instruction |

| Topic | Strengths | Challenges | Short-Term Recommendations | Long-Term Recommendations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identify and adopt evidence-based SEL programs | Schools are already in this process<br><br>School leaders have the autonomy to choose programs that best meet their students' needs | Concern regarding loss of autonomy<br><br>Care must be taken in choosing evidence-based programs since some schools already have successful programs in place | • Include evidence-based programs as part of the SEL resource and needs assessment<br>• Use findings from SEL assessment and include in multi-year implementation program<br>• Use MTSS as a framework for existing and new SEL programs | • Determine a system for implantation of evidence-based programs (geographic, feeder systems, etc.) |
| Establish systems for continuous improve-ment | Currently developing assessment tools and resources to measure and track students' skills and competencies | With current levels of testing data work, internal capacity may need to be built to deal with SEL assessment | • Create a plan for evaluating outcomes and fidelity of instruction with understandable measures<br>• Determine a plan for measuring success of "homegrown" programs<br>• Professional learning around establishing systems for data collection and improvement plans | • Evaluate fidelity of program implementation and outcomes<br>• Monitor and track implementation outcomes and SEL outcomes<br>• Report on success areas for growth |

Note. Adapted from CASEL's Social and Emotional Learning Readiness and Engagement Analysis (2016) for "The District"
MTSS – Multi-Tiered System of Supports, PLC – Professional Learning Community, PD – Professional Development, PBL – Project-Based Learning

# Appendix P – Well-Managed Schools Social Skills

## Well Managed Schools Program

█████ Elementary believes children should be educated in a healthy, nurturing, and supportive environment where lifetime habits are encouraged and reinforced. To support these beliefs, we are implementing the Boys Town Well-Managed Schools explicit social skills instruction to complement our PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports). The Boys Town Well-Managed Schools training took place in August and teachers are now using it in their classrooms. This program emphasizes relationship building, proactive classroom management practices, and social skills instruction to reduce behaviors that interfere with learning, and to empower students with self-management skills. Boys Town is one of the few programs that can be integrated into the entire school day and across the curriculum and can be applied by parents and guardians at home.

There are 16 essential skills that encourage students to accept responsibility for their behavior while motivating them to make the best choices that they can.

1. Following Instructions- Look at the person. Say "Okay." Do what you've been asked right away. Check back.

2. Accepting Criticism or a Consequence- Look at the person. Say "Okay." Stay calm.

3. Accepting "No" for an Answer- Look at the person. Say "Okay." Stay calm. If you disagree, ask later.

4. Greeting Others- Look at the person. Use a friendly voice. Say "Hi" or "Hello."

5. Getting the Teacher's Attention- Look at the teacher. Raise your hand. Stay calm. Wait until the teacher says your name. Ask your question.

6. Asking for Help- Look at the person. Ask the person if they have time to help you. Clearly explain the kind of help that you need. Thank the person for helping.

7. Disagreeing Appropriately- Look at the person. Use a friendly voice. Tell why you feel differently. Give a reason. Listen to the other person.

8. Listening- Look at the person who is talking and stay quiet. Wait until the person is finished talking before you speak.

9. Appropriate Voice Tone- Listen to the level of the voices around you. Change your voice tone to match. Watch and listen for visual or verbal cues and adjust your voice as needed.

10. Making an Apology- Look at the person. Use a serious, sincere voice. Say "I'm sorry for …" or "I want to apologize for..." Explain how you plan to do better in the future. Say, "Thanks for listening."

11. Having a Conversation- Look at the person. Use a friendly voice. Listen to what the other person says. When there is a break in the conversation, ask a question or share your thoughts.

12. Working with Others- Identify the task to be completed. Assign tasks to each person. Discuss ideas in a calm, quiet voice and let everyone share their ideas. Work on tasks until completed.

13. Accepting Compliments- Look at the person. Use a friendly voice. Say "Thank you."

14. Staying on Task- Look at your task or assignment. Think about the steps needed to complete the task. Focus all your attention on the task. Ignore distractions and interruptions from others. Stop working only when instructed.

15. Sharing with Others- Let the other person use the item first. Ask if you can use it later. When you get to use it, offer it back to the other person after you have used it.

16. Asking Permission- Look at the person. Use a calm and friendly voice. Say, 'May I…" Accept the answer calmly

| Emergent Themes | Teacher A *Well-Managed Schools* | Teacher B *Second Step* | Teacher C *Conscious Discipline* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Theme #1<br><br>Knowledge of Gifted Learners' Social Emotional Needs | "One of them [gifted student] doesn't need anything, honestly."<br><br>"And the other one needs it a lot. He will cry if he's wrong…thinks he's right all the time and sometimes he's not and that's really, really hard for him."<br><br>"[One student is] really sensitive, and I think he's really, really immature. And very bright."<br><br>"Yes, probably one of the most immature kids I've ever had. Ever. But just incredibly bright – And at the same time, the difference between the two…"<br><br>"These kids are used to being right all the time, and things coming easy, so when their behavior is a problem for them they actually don't think they're wrong. It doesn't matter if you go through the process with | "I'm one of those people who really believes the best way to support them - the kids like that - is in the classroom, and that you need to-- That's really what drives all of the differentiation I do."<br><br>"We do passion projects…we try to connect everyone with a mentor…We try to make it more authentic and connected to the real world and interests of people."<br><br>Now, I've got these really smart kids, and they don't know how to work as a team. And they don't know how to -- when they're feeling really angry or frustrated or when they're seeing things totally in some black and white viewpoint -- they don't have any negotiating skills to bring people along. And they don't know how to be kind when they're disagreeing.' It's just all these things that …" | "I think maybe some of the [gifted students] become hyper-vigilant or just hyper-sensitive to [the curriculum]."<br><br>"There's [*sic*] a couple of them that become very self-critical."<br><br>"For a couple of those students who were very goal-oriented, if they didn't meet the goal, and they knew that they weren't quite there yet, they were more critical of themselves than perhaps other students would be."<br><br>"The other students saw themselves on the continuum of getting there, but these students wanted to be there."<br><br>"Growth mindset vs. the fixed. There's a couple of them [gifted] who definitely still feel like, 'I was born like this. I know everything'."<br><br>"[After assessment] …every single student [mostly gifted] …all improved |

them. They still don't think they were wrong."

"They need to process it in a different way."

"I think that, you know, gifted kids' brains work on a little bit of a different level. I think making mistakes, for kids that are struggling with behavior, is a lot harder for them to cope with and that's why we often see a little bit different behavior problems with them, because, either they've been told by society so much that they're so smart, or they have just realized on their own. You know, that metacognition, like, 'What is going on here? Why don't they get this?' That kind of thing."

"[My two gifted students] They're both incredibly competitive, so when something is pointed out that they're doing wrong, that's really, really hard to manage internally.

"It opens up conversation and it makes the-- It normalizes the problems that people have."

"The kinds of struggles that most of my gifted kids have aren't even a part of the curriculum."

"It helps with the typical, normal student behavior stuff, but it's the kind of the stuff for the most part that's not the struggles that my TAG kids are having."

"We would do a lot of looking at different out of the box solutions to things, and it's not like that doesn't happen, but it's just kind of not part of the Second Step thing either."

"We've been doing some work on growth mindsets and trying to help build resiliency."

in all eight areas…They were less disruptive. They had evidence of more executive brain function. They had less aggressive behaviors, and more pro-social behaviors."

"They were engaged. They were curious, as they can be. They were curious about the reasons why, and why we were doing it [the curriculum], and how it was going to be effective to their lives…it was the bigger picture they wanted to see…so they [gifted] are good participants for that reason, because there is a big picture you can grasp."

Theme #2 Systemic Decisions

"…so, I think that the idea was if we implemented it [curriculum] school-wide then you're cutting down on behavior problems."

"We had … Caring Community…it was very much homegrown…"

"The principal got one [Second Step curriculum] for each grade year and

"It began maybe three or four years ago in the kindergarten classrooms, then slowly started rolling up."

| Part A: Curriculum Selection | | [we] kind of preview[ed] it to see what we thought." | "We went through a process of investigating different curriculums [*sic*] last year and as a staff we chose to continue with Conscious Discipline and apply it school-wide." |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | "There's a ton I could do about social-emotional learning, but it's like, "Since I have this thing that I'm supposed to do with fidelity," and all of us are supposed to be on the same -- like, all of us do empathy in fall, and all of us do problem-solving in the spring, so we can have those school-wide conversations and be using the same language. If I wasn't forced into that little box, I would probably be a lot more creative and that would be good for my gifted kids." | |
| Part B Training | "We've done the Well-Managed Schools training - This is our fourth year that we've used it school-wide." | Interviewer: Does Second Step not have teacher trainings? Like, multiple days? | "This year at the beginning of the year, we had a whole school professional development thing where we brought in a professional trainer and we were all taught about it. Now, throughout the year, we have monthly professional developments around applying different areas of Conscious Discipline everything." |
| | "[4 years ago] We did the big two to three-day training…And they've done a refresher every year." | "We didn't have one. We just get this big manual." | |
| Theme #3 Flexibility and Sugges- | "He does [need different tools] … but I don't feel like this is necessarily the best program for him either." | "I think one thing that would be really cool is if it was a little bit more modular, so that you could look at it | Nothing I can think of off-hand [to change] that would just be specific to those students." |

| tions for Change Related to TAG Students | "I think for them it needs to be just a little bit deeper." | and say, 'Oh, it's got three big sections, like empathy—.'" | "I had to make a couple of accommodations in short periods of time for a couple of them who were also kind of have [*sic*] issues with ADD. They're twice-exceptional. So, they need to be reminded extra times, or be given extra time to complete their goal, or …" |
|---|---|---|---|
| | "I think it just needs to be more direct. If they have those social-emotional needs, they're not going to want to listen to you giving them corrective teaching." | "Anyways, it's kind of in these three big areas and it would be nice if it was-- Sometimes they go over three or four lessons, which-- To work on the same problem for a whole month once a week is really not great." | |
| | | "If it was more modular, and then you could have this palette of things to choose from. It would be like differentiating, right?" | "The same accommodations that they get for other tasks, although it's not necessarily built in, so you have to kind of create that part of the normal accommodations you'd make for those students anyway." |
| | | Problem-solving strategies. Coping strategies-- Because it doesn't really teach them the strategies to deal with their frustration. It just gives them a scoping sequence." | "It just wasn't explicit part of it, but it was definitely flexible enough for me to do that." |
| | | "This curriculum is not differentiated." | |
| | | "The way that the Second Step works is that you get a partner and then you tell your partner this, or you and your partner work on a scenario and you talk about it. It's all very much talking. I think if I was-- We don't ever really ask the kids, you know, 'What issues are you having? What | |

would you like help with?' We don't really—"

"No. There's very little that's open-ended."

"-- It's just not very creative."

"I think those are the big things, making it more differentiated and giving the kids more of a voice."

"They don't really have a ton of-- They talk to a partner. They're supposed to use the same partner for the whole thing, and it's like, 'I'm not going to do that.'"

"There's some evidence that it's transferring out of the moment when we're doing it, but there's not a lot of evidence that it's changing how kids think when they're in the moment."

There's a lack of creativity. It forces the lessons into a box. It is lock-step. It needs to be less passive. The lessons make it homogenous.

"I take the attitude that I'm teaching the future leaders, so what characteristics do I want future leaders to have? And how can I make sure they're getting a heavy dose of that,

when they're nine and ten and they
still listen to me?"

**Appendix R – *Well-Managed Schools* Evaluation Simplified SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017)**

| Categories | Sub-Categories | Not at All (0) | Mentioned (1) | Satisfactory Coverage (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| **Asynchronous Development**<br><br>0/6 | **Mention of, or appreciation for an uneven rate of development in cognitive, affective and physical domains** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Focus on teaching the whole child –** "mind, heart, spirit, social aspects" (Gatto-Walden, 2016, p. 23) | ✔ | | | |
| **Emotional Intelligence**<br><br>3/15 | **Identification of emotions in others** | | | ✔ | |
| | **Accurate expression of emotions and needs associated with those** | | ✔ | | |
| | **Provides a distinction between the difference between accurate and honest emotions** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Focus on intrinsic motivation** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Lessons include learning about empathy** | | | ✔ | |
| **Feelings of Being Different Addressed** | **Offer a variety of grouping strategies** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Provide a variety of opportunities for social interaction** | ✔ | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | "Unique" or atypical characteristics mentioned and supported | ✔ | | | |
| 1/15 | Create safe spaces for all types of students | | ✔ | | |
| | Give opportunities for creating a variety of adult support systems | ✔ | | | |
| **Interpersonal Communication** | Strategies for communication with peers | | | ✔ | |
| 3/12 | Communication with parents & family relationships | | ✔ | | |
| | Strategies for emphasizing self-advocacy, self-efficacy and conflict management | ✔ | | | |
| | Strategies to assist in appreciation of gender differences | ✔ | | | |
| **Introspective Focus** **Self-Actualization** **& Development of positive intrapersonal skills** | Interpersonal skills: Self-assessment | ✔ | | | |
| | Interpersonal skills: Self-esteem | ✔ | | | |
| | Interpersonal skills: Self-regulation | | | ✔ | |
| 2/18 | Aspects for self-knowledge related to identity | ✔ | | | |
| | Self-knowledge in regard to interests related to student strengths | ✔ | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| | **Opportunities given to identify self-beliefs and moral reasoning** | ✔ | | | |
| **Overexcitabilities** | **Heightened intellectual intensity –** intensity and accelerated mental activity, questioning, seeking answers | ✔ | | | |
| | **Emotional intensity –** extremes of feeling, inhibition, affective memory, anxieties, fear, guilt, depression | | ✔ | | |
| 1/15 | **Psychomotor Intensity –** heightened physical response to stimuli, confident and aware of bodily movement | ✔ | | | |
| | **Heightened response to sensory input –** intense reactions to sights, sounds, tastes, textures, smells, etc. | ✔ | | | |
| | **Imaginational Intensity** – vivid imagination, interest in creative endeavors (i.e. fantasy, metaphors, storytelling, science fiction) | ✔ | | | |
| **Perfectionism**<br><br>**A distinction is made between striving for excellence, versus seeking perfection.** | **Addressing negative issues such as fear of failure** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Promoting/supporting making mistakes** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Ensuring challenge for all** | ✔ | | | |
| 1/12 | **Positive self-talk** | | ✔ | | |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Wellness/Mindfulness Stress Management**<br><br>**Lessons on stress reduction, wellness and mindfulness strategies are included in the curriculum. These may include:**<br><br>1/12 | **Being conscious and aware of the present moment** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Using breathing and focus to encourage calmness in feelings, thoughts & physical sensations.** | | ✔ | | |
| | **Strategies for coping with stress** | ✔ | | | |
| | **A regular systematic course of mindfulness activities** | ✔ | | | |
| **Risk-taking**<br><br>**Lessons are framed to encourage students to be willing to make mistakes.**<br><br>1/18 | **Growth mindset focus (Dweck, 2006)** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Acceptance and learning opportunities from social mistakes** | | ✔ | | |
| | **Acceptance and learning opportunities from academic mistakes** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Provides physical and emotional space for students to work** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Gives opportunity for choice in activities, process and products** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Provides support for taking chances academically, socially and emotionally** | ✔ | | | |
| **Talent Development** | **Activities involve leadership opportunities** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Career opportunities are included in lesson activities** | ✔ | | | |

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| Topics of academic and career planning are included<br><br>0/12 | College and career choices are discussed | ✔ | | | |
| | Opportunities for guest speakers and expert opinions (i.e. TED Talks, community involvement) | ✔ | | | |
| Counseling Referral Guidelines<br><br>Curriculum gives information to instructors about when issues surfacing during lessons should be referred to counseling.<br><br>0/18 | Referral suggestions include school counseling services | ✔ | | | |
| | Referral suggestions include private counseling services | ✔ | | | |
| | Counseling options discussed are specific to gifted | ✔ | | | |
| | Suggestions are made for preventative counseling | ✔ | | | |
| | Group and one-to-one counseling options are suggested | ✔ | | | |
| | Professional testing for determination of learning disabilities or gifted identification are mentioned | ✔ | | | |
| **Holistic Score: Total the number of checks in each category – mode of checklist items (Muskal & Laydens, 2000)** | | 39 | 7 | 4 | 0 |

**General Comments:** There were no strong areas on this rubric for supporting gifted learners' social and emotional development.

**Strength Areas:** Areas with some points were Interpersonal and Emotional Intelligence

**Weak Areas:** All the rest of the categories

**Appendix S – *Second Step* Evaluation Simplified SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017)**

| Component | "Look-Fors" | No Mention (0) | Some Mention (1) | Covered (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| **Asynchronous Development** <br><br> 0/6 | Mention of, or appreciation for an uneven rate of development in cognitive, affective and physical domains | ✔ | | | |
| | Focus on teaching the whole child – "mind, heart, spirit, social aspects" (Gatto-Walden, 2016, p. 23) | ✔ | | | |
| **Emotional Intelligence** <br><br><br> 7/15 | Identification of emotions in others | | | ✔ | |
| | Accurate expression of emotions and needs associated with those | | | ✔ | |
| | Provides a distinction between the difference between accurate and honest emotions | | ✔ | | |
| | Focus on intrinsic motivation | ✔ | | | |
| | Lessons include learning about empathy | | | ✔ | |
| **Feelings of Being Different Addressed** <br><br><br> 3/15 | Offer a variety of grouping strategies | ✔ | | | |
| | Provide a variety of opportunities for social interaction | | | ✔ | |
| | "Unique" or atypical characteristics mentioned and supported | ✔ | | | |
| | Create safe spaces for all types of students | | ✔ | | |
| | Give opportunities for creating a variety of adult support systems | ✔ | | | |
| **Interpersonal Communication** <br><br> 4/12 | Strategies for communication with peers | | | ✔ | |
| | Communication with parents & family relationships | ✔ | | | |

| | | | | ✔ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Strategies for emphasizing self-advocacy, self-efficacy and conflict management** | | | | ✔ | |
| | **Strategies to assist in appreciation of gender differences** | ✔ | | | |
| **Introspective Focus Self-Actualization & Development of positive intrapersonal skills**<br><br>5/18 | **Interpersonal skills: Self-assessment** | | ✔ | | |
| | **Interpersonal skills: Self-esteem** | | ✔ | | |
| | **Interpersonal skills: Self-regulation** | | | ✔ | |
| | **Aspects for self-knowledge related to identity** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Self-knowledge in regard to interests related to student strengths** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Opportunities given to identify self-beliefs and moral reasoning** | | ✔ | | |
| **Overexcitabilities**<br><br>3/15 | **Heightened intellectual intensity –** intensity and accelerated mental activity, questioning, seeking answers | ✔ | | | |
| | **Emotional intensity –** extremes of feeling, inhibition, affective memory, anxieties, fear, guilt, depression | | ✔ | | |
| | **Psychomotor Intensity –** heightened physical response to stimuli, confident and aware of bodily movement | | ✔ | | |
| | **Heightened response to sensory input –** intense reactions to sights, sounds, tastes, textures, smells, etc. | | ✔ | | |
| | **Imaginational Intensity** – vivid imagination, interest in creative endeavors (i.e. fantasy, metaphors, storytelling, science fiction) | ✔ | | | |
| **Perfectionism** | **Addressing negative issues such as fear of failure** | ✔ | | | |

| A distinction is made between striving for excellence, versus seeking perfection.  1/12 | Promoting/supporting making mistakes | ✓ | | | |
| | Ensuring challenge for all | ✓ | | | |
| | Positive self-talk | | ✓ | | |

| Wellness/Mindfulness Stress Management Lessons on stress reduction, wellness and mindfulness strategies are included in the curriculum. These may include:  3/12 | Being conscious and aware of the present moment | | ✓ | | |
| | Using breathing and focus to encourage calmness in feelings, thoughts & physical sensations. | | ✓ | | |
| | Strategies for coping with stress | | ✓ | | |
| | A regular systematic course of mindfulness activities | ✓ | | | |
| Risk-taking Lessons are framed to encourage students to be willing to make mistakes.  1/18 | Growth mindset focus (Dweck, 2006) | ✓ | | | |
| | Acceptance and learning opportunities from social mistakes | | ✓ | | |
| | Acceptance and learning opportunities from academic mistakes | ✓ | | | |
| | Provides physical and emotional space for students to work | ✓ | | | |
| | Gives opportunity for choice in activities, process and products | ✓ | | | |
| | Provides support for taking chances academically, socially and emotionally | ✓ | | | |
| Talent Development Topics of academic and career planning are included | Activities involve leadership opportunities | ✓ | | | |
| | Career opportunities are included in lesson activities | ✓ | | | |
| | College and career choices are discussed | ✓ | | | |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|:-:|:-:|:-:|:-:|
| 0/12 | Opportunities for guest speakers and expert opinions (i.e. TED Talks, community involvement) | ✔ | | | |
| **Counseling Referral Guidelines**<br>**Curriculum gives information to instructors about when issues surfacing during lessons should be referred to counseling.**<br><br>0/18 | **Referral suggestions include school counseling services** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Referral suggestions include private counseling services** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Counseling options discussed are specific to gifted** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Suggestions are made for preventative counseling** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Group and one-to-one counseling options are suggested** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Professional testing for determination of learning disabilities or gifted identification are mentioned** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Holistic Score: Total the number of checks in each category – mode of checklist items (Muskal & Laydens, 2000)** | 31 | 14 | 6 | 0 |

**General Comments:** There were no strong areas on this rubric for supporting gifted learners' social and emotional development.

**Strength Areas:** Stronger than others: Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Focus

**Weak Areas:** No mention or very little of the following: Counseling Referral Guidelines, Talent Development, Risk-Taking, Perfectionism, Asynchronous Development

**Appendix T –** *Conscious Discipline* **Evaluation Simplified SELECTED Rubric™ (Turner, 2017)**

| Categories | Sub-Categories | Not at All (0) | Mentioned (1) | Satisfactory Coverage (2) | Extensive Coverage (3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Asynchronous Development** <br><br> 5/6 | **Mention of, or appreciation for an uneven rate of development in cognitive, affective and physical domains** | | | ✔ | |
| | **Focus on teaching the whole child –** "mind, heart, spirit, social aspects" (Gatto-Walden, 2016, p. 23) | | | | ✔ |
| **Emotional Intelligence** <br><br><br> 14/15 | **Identification of emotions in others** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Accurate expression of emotions and needs associated with those** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Provides a distinction between the difference between accurate and honest emotions** | | | ✔ | |
| | **Focus on intrinsic motivation** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Lessons include learning about empathy** | | | | ✔ |
| **Feelings of Being Different Addressed** | **Offer a variety of grouping strategies** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Provide a variety of opportunities for social interaction** | | | ✔ | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | "Unique" or atypical characteristics mentioned and supported | | | ✔ | |
| 10/15 | Create safe spaces for all types of students | | | | ✔ |
| | Give opportunities for creating a variety of adult support systems | | | | ✔ |
| **Interpersonal Communication** | **Strategies for communication with peers** | | | | ✔ |
| 9/12 | **Communication with parents & family relationships** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Strategies for emphasizing self-advocacy, self-efficacy and conflict management** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Strategies to assist in appreciation of gender differences** | ✔ | | | |
| **Introspective Focus**<br><br>**Self-Actualization**<br><br>**Development of positive intrapersonal skills** | **Interpersonal skills: Self-assessment** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Interpersonal skills: Self-esteem** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Interpersonal skills: Self-regulation** | | | | ✔ |
| 14/18 | **Aspects for self-knowledge related to identity** | | | ✔ | |
| | **Self-knowledge in regard to interests related to student strengths** | ✔ | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Opportunities given to identify self-beliefs and moral reasoning | | | ✔ | |
| Overexcitabilities | Heightened intellectual intensity – intensity and accelerated mental activity, questioning, seeking answers | ✔ | | | |
| | Emotional intensity – extremes of feeling, inhibition, affective memory, anxieties, fear, guilt, depression | | | ✔ | |
| 4/15 | Psychomotor Intensity – heightened physical response to stimuli, confident and aware of bodily movement | | ✔ | | |
| | Heightened response to sensory input – intense reactions to sights, sounds, tastes, textures, smells, etc. | | ✔ | | |
| | Imaginational Intensity – vivid imagination, interest in creative endeavors (i.e. fantasy, metaphors, storytelling, science fiction) | ✔ | | | |
| Perfectionism<br><br>A distinction is made between striving for excellence, versus seeking perfection. | Addressing negative issues such as fear of failure | | | | ✔ |
| | Promoting/supporting making mistakes | | | | ✔ |
| | Ensuring challenge for all | ✔ | | | |
| 11/12 | Positive self-talk | | | | ✔ |

| Category | Descriptor | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Wellness/Mindfulness Stress Management**<br><br>**Lessons on stress reduction, wellness and mindfulness strategies are included in the curriculum. These may include:**<br><br>1/12 | **Being conscious and aware of the present moment** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Using breathing and focus to encourage calmness in feelings, thoughts & physical sensations.** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Strategies for coping with stress** | | | | ✔ |
| | **A regular systematic course of mindfulness activities** | | | | ✔ |
| **Risk-taking**<br><br>**Lessons are framed to encourage students to be willing to make mistakes.**<br><br>14/18 | **Growth mindset focus (Dweck, 2006)** | | | ✔ | |
| | **Acceptance and learning opportunities from social mistakes** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Acceptance and learning opportunities from academic mistakes** | | | ✔ | |
| | **Provides physical and emotional space for students to work** | | | | ✔ |
| | **Gives opportunity for choice in activities, process and products** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Provides support for taking chances academically, socially and emotionally** | | | ✔ | |
| **Talent Development** | **Activities involve leadership opportunities** | ✔ | | | |
| | **Career opportunities are included in lesson activities** | ✔ | | | |

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| Topics of academic and career planning are included<br><br>2/12 | College and career choices are discussed | ✔ | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Opportunities for guest speakers and expert opinions (i.e. TED Talks, community involvement) | | ✔ | | |
| Counseling Referral Guidelines<br><br>Curriculum gives information to instructors about when issues surfacing during lessons should be referred to counseling.<br><br>9/18 | Referral suggestions include school counseling services | | ✔ | | |
| | Referral suggestions include private counseling services | | ✔ | | |
| | Counseling options discussed are specific to gifted | ✔ | | | |
| | Suggestions are made for preventative counseling | | ✔ | | |
| | Group and one-to-one counseling options are suggested | | ✔ | | |
| | Professional testing for determination of learning disabilities or gifted identification are mentioned | ✔ | | | |
| **Holistic Score: Total the number of checks in each category – mode of checklist items (Muskal & Laydens, 2000)** | | 11 | 7 | 10 | 22 |

**General Comments:** Although there is no specific discussion directly related to gifted learners in the materials, there are many aspects of this curriculum which would benefit the social and emotional development of gifted students.

**Strength Areas:** Emotional Intelligence, Asynchronous Development, Perfectionism, Wellness/Mindfulness were the strongest areas.

**Weak Areas:** Talent Development, Overexcitabilities were the 2 weakest areas.

**Appendix U – Second Step Song**

committee for children

**Grades 2 and 3 Song Lyrics**

## Be a Learner

(All right! Come on, listen now.)

Be respectful (yeah, yeah)
Be skillful (yeah, yeah)
Be a learner (yeah, yeah, yeah,
  yeah, yeah)
Be respectful, be skillful, be a learner
  (yeah, yeah)

You come to school to learn
Well, there's lots of things to see and do
So make the most of it
The power is inside of you

Chorus:
Focus attention
Listen with your ears, eyes, and brain
Use your self-talk
Be assertive and you will gain

The lesson is starting up
Your eyes and ears are focused in
When someone starts to talk
Show your respect by listening

Chorus

Be respectful (yeah, yeah)
Be skillful (yeah, yeah)
Be a learner (yeah, yeah, yeah,
  yeah, yeah)
Be respectful, be skillful, be
  a learner
  (yeah, yeah)

(Ha, ha! Yeah! I think you've got it!)

Keep saying "Stay on task!"
Ignore distractions, that's the key
And when you need some help
Be sure to ask assertively

Chorus

Be respectful (yeah, yeah)
Be skillful (yeah, yeah)
Be a learner (yeah, yeah, yeah,
  yeah, yeah)
Be respectful, be skillful, be a learner
  (yeah, yeah)

**Grades 2 and 3 Song Lyrics**

## Be a Learner

(All right! Come on, listen now.)

Be respectful (yeah, yeah)
Be skillful (yeah, yeah)
Be a learner (yeah, yeah, yeah,
  yeah, yeah)
Be respectful, be skillful, be a learner
  (yeah, yeah)

You come to school to learn
Well, there's lots of things to see and do
So make the most of it
The power is inside of you

Chorus:
Focus attention
Listen with your ears, eyes, and brain
Use your self-talk
Be assertive and you will gain

The lesson is starting up
Your eyes and ears are focused in
When someone starts to talk
Show your respect by listening

Chorus

Be respectful (yeah, yeah)
Be skillful (yeah, yeah)
Be a learner (yeah, yeah, yeah,
  yeah, yeah)
Be respectful, be skillful, be
  a learner
  (yeah, yeah)

(Ha, ha! Yeah! I think you've got it!)

Keep saying "Stay on task!"
Ignore distractions, that's the key
And when you need some help
Be sure to ask assertively

Chorus

Be respectful (yeah, yeah)
Be skillful (yeah, yeah)
Be a learner (yeah, yeah, yeah,
  yeah, yeah)
Be respectful, be skillful, be a learner
  (yeah, yeah)