

St. Catherine University

SOPHIA

Masters of Arts in Education Action Research
Papers

Education

7-2021

The Effects of Social-Emotional Learning Strategies on Promoting Positive Behavior on Elementary Students

Lauren Stang

Andrea Wells

Follow this and additional works at: <https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

The Effects of Social-Emotional Learning Strategies on Promoting Positive Behavior on
Elementary Students

Submitted on March 19, 2021

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

Lauren Stang and Andrea Wells

Saint Catherine University

St. Paul, Minnesota

Advisor: Carol Knicker

Date: March 19, 2021

Acknowledgements

Thank you to our families for supporting and encouraging us in this process. We could not have done this without your unconditional support and patience with us during this time. Thank you to those who helped read through and edit our paper. Thank you to all the professors at St. Catherine's University who helped us along the way.

Abstract

The focus of this action research project was to implement social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons to help promote positive behaviors in the classroom. Participants in the six week study included 16 first graders and 21 fourth graders, in two different classrooms, in Central Minnesota. During the intervention both classrooms participated in daily morning meetings, constructed classroom norms, weekly journals and SEL lessons. Data sources included daily behavior frequency tally charts, behavior office referrals, pre/post feedback forms, student journals and a teacher lesson log. After analyzing the data collected during this research project, the researchers concluded that weekly social-emotional teaching had a positive effect on students in elementary schools. Further research could study the impact of a school-wide scale on promoting positive behaviors from social emotional teaching.

Keywords: social-emotional learning, elementary, behaviors

Academics alone do not indicate success. Students can be knowledgeable, but if they do not have the skillset to navigate the workplace and society, they will not be successful in life (Tough, 2013). In most classrooms, the issue is that students lack the essential skills needed to succeed in a school setting. When students lack social-emotional skills, they may exhibit undesirable and aggressive behaviors that can lead to lower academic performance and negative peer relationships. According to Albert Bandura's social learning theory (1977), children learn by observing others.

Kasler (2012) found that when a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) intervention becomes integrated into the school, there is a drop in negative behaviors. Utilizing a school-wide approach helps to ensure that any SEL program is successful. Yang et al. (2018) agreed with Oberle (2016) and went further to say that a positive environment makes students feel comfortable and sets them up for success with positive social skills. A positive, universal SEL approach has shown improvement in academic outcomes and disruptive behaviors (Taylor, 2017).

Students in poverty have high stressors in life, and often these students are in stress mode which makes focusing and regulating emotions harder (Tough, 2013). When looking at monthly referral data for a low-income elementary school, a high percentage of students exhibited behaviors that resulted in negative behavior referrals. The high behavior referrals could result from students' low academic achievement levels, lack of social skills, or difficult home life. The researchers taught social-emotional interventions to help teach social skills and conflict resolution to reduce the behavior referrals. The study contained a first and a fourth grade classroom. The school is a low-income, Title 1 school where 88% of students receive free and reduced lunch. The breakdown of races includes 65% Black students, 18% White students, 9% of two or more races, 6% Hispanic, and 2% Asian or American Indian. This action research

study aimed to observe the effects that social-emotional learning strategies had on promoting positive behaviors in an elementary classroom.

Theoretical Framework

This action research lens is grounded in the SEL framework of The Collaborative for Academic, Social, Emotional Learning (CASEL). As defined by CASEL (2020), "social-emotional learning is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (para. 1). Some of the main components of the SEL framework are: responsible decision-making, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and self-awareness (CASEL, 2020). Teachers who use CASEL's framework understand the importance of positive learning environments. Improving both social and academic skills are the main point of the CASEL SEL framework (CASEL, 2020).

The CASEL SEL framework is the focus of this study. According to Schonert-Reichl (2017), when schools can teach SEL skills, students' negative behaviors reduce and they are academically successful. The goal is to encourage positive thinking, emotional, and behavior skills when faced with difficult situations. Academics are not the only indicator of student success. Students need to understand how to interact with others and handle the daily challenges of life to succeed (Greenburg, 2017). The students in this study are social humans who learn through working with others. The CASEL framework teaches the students the skills needed to work with their peers in a positive learning environment.

SEL is a necessary component for elementary students, promoting the skills needed for students to be successful. The literature review supports the teaching and implementation of

social-emotional learning competencies in schools. The research examines the benefits, drawbacks, and strategies needed for a successful social-emotional learning approach.

Review of Literature

Social-emotional learning is a necessary ingredient for elementary students. Many children enter the classroom having experienced trauma and are unaware of the social-emotional skills they need to succeed in the classroom. Tough (2013) spoke about how trauma in many students' lives affects these students mentally and physically. Our bodies react to stress, and it causes our executive functioning to be challenging to regulate. These external stressors can make it hard for students to complete basic tasks in school, such as focusing on or regulating their emotions (Mendelson, 2015; Tough, 2013). According to Plumb (2016), "A child with difficulties in self-regulation, attention, impulse control, and higher-order thinking may struggle in the typical classroom environment" (p. 40). Social-emotional learning is prevalent in many school settings to help focus on student social and academic concerns (Plumb, 2016).

Students impacted by trauma are often unable to manage the requirements of participating in a classroom setting. The issue in most classrooms is that students lack the essential skills needed to succeed in a school setting. When students lack social-emotional skills, they may exhibit undesirable and aggressive behaviors that can lead to lower academic performance and negative peer relationships. This literature review aims to identify the importance of social-emotional learning, find the benefits and drawbacks of social-emotional learning in schools, and examine prior studies. SEL is essential in providing students with the skills to improve academically and throughout their adult lives.

This research is grounded in a conceptual framework shaped by Bandura (1977) and Skinner (1988). Albert Bandura created the social learning theory, later renamed the social

cognitive theory. Bandura's social learning theory described that children learn by watching and observing others. Researchers have found, "Some SEL interventions are grounded in the social learning theories, that is, they focus on how children interpret social cues and respond to social challenges" (McClelland, 2017, p. 3). The second theory is called Behaviorism, created by B.F. Skinner. Skinner stated that the experiences in our environment shape our behavior. According to Banks, Sapp, & Obiakor (2014), Skinner believed that feelings happen from our experiences and can be affected by positive and negative reinforcements. Both of these theories explain how our environments around us regulate our emotions.

Social-emotional learning was defined by Yang, Bear, & Mary (2018) as the:

Process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply 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. (p. 46)

Social-emotional learning is composed of five main pieces: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Carroll, 2020; Choi, 2014). SEL also consists of three different domains of skills: thinking, behavioral, and self-control (McKown, 2017). This definition summarizes the critical components of SEL. These components are throughout many studies referenced in this literature review.

Benefits

Educators who use social-emotional learning find several benefits both within their classrooms and school-wide. SEL connects academics with the skills to be successful in all areas of life. In some schools, attendance rates have soared (along with the school's climate in motivation and morale) due to the intervention's positive outcomes (Yang et al., 2018). Choi

(2014) and Schonert (2015) stated that a SEL approach that incorporates empathy and mindfulness helps students foster positive school and social relationships, improve self-regulation, and reduce stress. Students are calmer, less depressed, and more likely to have positive relationships when reading the social cues of others (McKown, 2017). When there is an emphasis on positive youth development (PYD), students can focus more on their strengths and become more engaged in positive and supportive environments (McKevitt, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

School settings that promote a positive and supportive environment create emotionally healthy students who have the skills to succeed. School environments became more safe, caring, and structured after implementing a SEL approach (McKevitt, 2012). Several researchers, including Jones (2017), McKevitt (2012), Schonert (2015), and Taylor (2017), all agree that a robust SEL approach will give positive results academically, behaviorally, and socially. Research shows that there have been brain structure and functional improvements when children have engaged in SEL interventions (McClelland, 2017). The benefits of SEL interventions extend beyond the classroom. According to Jones (2017), having proper social-emotional skills can set students up for a prosperous and healthy life as adults.

Drawbacks

Although there are positive effects, a few studies have found little to no benefit to SEL interventions (Jones, 2017; McClelland, 2017). SEL requires more than teacher knowledge to be successful (Schonert, 2015). Many schools have not dedicated the time to train staff. An essential aspect of effective SEL implementation is teacher approval and understanding. The higher the approval level, the more effective the delivery (Carroll, 2020; McClelland, 2017). The absence of teacher training is not the only downfall; many SEL skills are missing at home due to a lack of resources for many families. The benefits of SEL reduce when implemented only at school (McClelland, 2017). McKown (2017) acknowledged that few quality assessments show the

actual outcomes and benefits of SEL interventions. The author's concern is not whether a benefit exists but how to measure the benefits accurately.

School-wide Approach

A school-wide approach can create benefits for students. According to Oberle (2016), using a school-wide approach can help students become the future leaders of tomorrow. Oberle (2016) defined a school-wide approach to SEL as, "the entire school community as the unit of change and aims to integrate SEL into daily interactions and practices at multiple setting levels in the school using collaborative efforts that include all staff, teachers, families, and children" (p. 278). Kasler (2012) found that when a SEL intervention becomes integrated into the school, there is a drop in negative behaviors. Implementing SEL throughout a school reinforces the longevity of the program within both the school and the community. For SEL to be successful, researchers have found that it needs to be implemented throughout the school and not limited to the classroom (Oberle, 2016; Yang et al., 2018). Full implementation of SEL requires the teaching of skills throughout the building, including the community. Places often forgotten are the hallways, lunchrooms, and playgrounds (Jones, 2017; Oberle, 2016).

While many researchers have agreed upon the necessity of school-wide SEL, others have found barriers to fully implementing this approach. The purpose of a school-wide approach is to reinforce these skills in all areas of the school. Jones (2017) made it clear that to have a successful approach with SEL, there needs to be a commitment of time to professional development on SEL implementation. In some schools, the initial round of teachers received education on SEL interventions. Problems occur when trained staff leave, and new staff lack training on the approach. After a few years, a mix of teachers implement it correctly, and others know nothing about it (Kasler 2012). Some teachers struggle to implement SEL into their teaching because of the lack of support from their administration (Oberle, 2016).

Positive Environments

Another strategy to ensure the success of a SEL intervention is to promote a positive school climate. Positive environments help students feel safe and supported. A practical SEL approach requires rules in the classroom of respect and teamwork. A classroom that feels supportive and has proper classroom management is more effective (Oberle, 2016). Yang et al. (2018) agreed with Oberle (2016) and went further to say that a positive environment makes students feel comfortable and sets them up for positive social skills. Students at high-risk have found benefits from having positive relationships with both teachers and friends (Nickerson, 2019). There is a reduction in bullying when students have strong relationships and support from adults (Nickerson, 2019).

When a positive school environment is not in place, a SEL intervention has limitations. Students who feel that their school is unsafe or lacks positive experiences might respond poorly to the SEL approach and develop negative behaviors. Those who experience prior negative interactions with others can feel isolated. These negative peer interactions create an isolated feeling among some students who then believe that it is their fault for not having the social and emotional skills of peers (Nickerson, 2019). Nickerson (2019) notes that students who are not engaged in school are more inclined to have negative attitudes and perceptions about their peers. A positive learning environment is essential for students' well-being.

Universal Approach

Social-emotional learning is best when implemented as a universal approach. A universal approach is when the intervention includes all students, instead of students singled out from the intervention. According to McKown (2017):

One meta-analysis of 213 universal school-based SEL programs found that about 57 percent of children who participated in well-implemented, evidence-based SEL programs showed improvement on measures of behavioral outcomes, compared with about 43 percent of children who didn't participate in such programs. (p. 164)

Low (2015) found three benefits of universal programs: they require few resources, reach at-risk students, and do not target individual students. Carroll (2020) found that SEL interventions are low-cost and productive, along with being especially valuable for students with severe behavioral difficulties. Having a positive, universal, SEL approach has shown to improve academic outcomes and lessen disruptive behaviors. Students of color and students in poverty benefit more from a universal approach (Taylor, 2017). Approaches to prevent bullying should be universal with SEL skills and positive behavioral interventions (Nickerson, 2019).

A universal approach is beneficial in ensuring students do not feel singled out. Researchers agree that targeting individuals can have benefits on behavior. Evans (2015) disagrees with the negatives of targeting individual students. He found that targeting could help provide support to students who are struggling and falling through the cracks. According to Nickerson (2019), students frequently bullied might not benefit from a universal approach. Specific and frequent intervention is a necessity in these cases. Taylor (2017) found evidence that there were practical universal SEL approaches; he also found some to be less effective. When thinking about how children develop and learn differently, Taylor (2017) reminded people that 'one size fits all' does not work in the school system. Some SEL approaches might not work for every student, and schools should use many different approaches to meet students' needs.

Conclusion

Social-emotional learning is a process that requires acceptance from many individuals in the school to be successful. It is not something that can be carried out by one person.

Social-emotional learning is composed of five main pieces: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Carroll, 2020; Choi, 2014). There are many benefits to using social-emotional learning. Choi (2014) and Schonert (2015) stated that a SEL approach that includes empathy and mindfulness helps students foster positive school and social relationships, better self-regulation, and reduce stress. There are methods and strategies for effective SEL, but it requires the school's help and guidance as a community. A positive environment and a universal classroom approach aid in the implementation of a practical SEL approach.

Based on the findings, a universal classroom approach is necessary to ensure students learn social skills to succeed in life. Using a universal approach can also make students feel safe to make mistakes in the classroom. Educators should establish classroom norms to help promote a positive learning environment where students feel safe and connected. SEL skills taught at least weekly could ensure students learn necessary social skills. Ultimately, SEL should be integrated within the classroom, school, and community to promote positive social interactions in all settings. Monitoring behavior can help educators see the positive impacts of implementing SEL.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to see what effect social-emotional learning had on decreasing inappropriate student behaviors. The intervention included a weekly SEL lesson about a specific skill on one of the five domains in the CASEL SEL framework. Students

participated in daily morning meetings along with journaling weekly about the SEL lesson. The researchers collected qualitative and quantitative data throughout the six weeks of intervention.

Participants

The participants in this study were elementary students enrolled in one of two schools. These schools are two buildings within one community; the first building is grades K-2, and the other building is grades 3-5. The schools are three miles from each other in Central Minnesota. Classroom A consisted of 16 students ages six and seven in a first grade classroom. Classroom B consisted of 22 students ages nine and ten in a fourth grade classroom. Due to the global pandemic, classroom B had 21 students that rotated between in person learning and online learning every other day. On Monday and Wednesday there were 13 students and on Tuesday and Thursday there were 14 students in the classroom. Three students were in the classroom from Monday to Thursday. On Fridays both Classroom A and Classroom B had students that learned from home. Both of the researchers in the study have been teaching at their current school for three years. Researcher A has taught first grade for two years. Researcher B taught third grade the previous year and looped to fourth grade with the same students.

Description of Intervention

The first component of the intervention started with students participating in a daily morning meeting. Both schools scheduled 20 minutes into the daily schedule for all classrooms to incorporate a morning meeting at the start of the day. Due to the global pandemic, some morning meeting components had to be adjusted to keep the 6-foot social distance rule. Classroom A started their morning meeting with all 16 students and the researcher standing in a circle. The researcher would ring the chime, and all students would breathe for two minutes. Students went around the circle saying good morning to every student each day to build positive

relationships. The students participated in a daily sharing with a partner. After the sharing, students went back to their spots and worked through their morning slides. The morning meeting consisted of a morning message about the day, daily calendar, skip counting, sight word reading, and other basic skill practice. Classroom B had a different morning meeting due to the pandemic. As stated above, one group of students were in the classroom while the group of students joined through a Google Meet virtually. The morning meeting in classroom B consisted of the same parts as classroom A.

Both classrooms also focused on creating a positive classroom environment with norms and routines. The classrooms had all the students work together to create their own classroom rules and norms that they agreed to follow. Researchers read stories and had discussions on why it was essential to follow the norms and routines. Classroom A ended each morning meeting by brainstorming together one positive goal for the class. Classroom B had students recite positive affirmations daily at the end of the morning meeting.

The last component to the intervention was the researchers teaching a SEL skill from the CASEL SEL framework to the students weekly. The SEL lessons followed CASEL's framework in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Since the classrooms consisted of different ages, the researcher found it more appropriate to implement lessons that best fit their students' needs. Classroom A utilized lesson plans from The Emotional ABCs curriculum. Each week researcher A taught one lesson directly from the Emotional ABCs. After the lesson, students journaled how that lesson made them feel. The students copied the sentence frame, "This lesson made me feel ____." Students created a vocabulary wall to reference different emotional words. If students did not know how to write, they drew a picture instead. The researcher in Classroom B taught daily SEL lessons that the

SEL coach from the school created. The lessons were taught universally to all students around a SEL topic for that week. At the end of the week, the students journaled about how the week's skill helped them and made them feel.

Data Collection

The intervention involved the use of five data collection tools. Three of the tools collected qualitative data, and two data tools collected quantitative data. The tools and procedures for each data tool are listed below.

Quantitative

The first quantitative data tool used was the Behavior Frequency Chart (Appendix A). The researcher collected three weeks' worth of baseline data before the intervention started and during the six weeks of the intervention using this tool. The Behavior Frequency Chart helped to document the frequency of negative behaviors for each student. Observations were recorded daily for each week of the intervention. Table 1 shows the behaviors observed on the frequency chart and their definitions.

Table 1

Behaviors and definitions

Behavior	Definition
Left Classroom	Student leaves the group without permission and will not come back after one prompt
Noncompliance	Refusing to follow directions after one prompt
Raised Voice/Arguing	Yelling or aggressive tone, arguing
Physical Contact/ Aggression	Any physical contact with the intent to cause harm
Inappropriate language	Name-calling, swear words, hurtful words, any words that are inappropriate for school Inappropriately using words directed toward another person

A tally was marked on the chart each time one of the behaviors was displayed. The Behavior Frequency Chart's purpose was to see how often students displayed negative behaviors and observed if the frequency of behaviors decreased after the six weeks of interventions.

The second quantitative data tool the researcher used was a behavior office referral form. During the three weeks of baseline data collection and the six weeks of intervention, the researcher used behavior office referrals. This form gave the researcher a detailed description of the negative behaviors that occurred. The purpose was to see if there was a correlation between inappropriate behaviors in the classroom and behaviors that resulted in an office referral. The form looked to see if the frequency reduced after the implementation of the intervention. These are school-wide data referral forms that require administrators' attention. To see if there was a change in behaviors, the researcher looked at the number of behavior referrals before and after the intervention.

Qualitative

The first qualitative data tool used was the Pre/Post Feedback Form (Appendix B). The researcher gave the Pre/Post Feedback Form before baseline data was collected and at the end of the study. Table 2 shows an example of the feedback form.

Table 2

Example of feedback form

	Yes/ Agree	No/Disagree
I feel comfortable in this class.		
The teacher in this class cares about me.		

Both researchers read the questions to the students and gave the students time to circle how they felt. With the age of the students in the study, the use of smiley faces helped students to understand. At the end of the study, the students completed the Post Feedback Form (Appendix C). The Pre/Post Feedback Forms' purpose was to gauge how the students felt about the classroom environment. The researchers also gathered information to see what the students know about SEL and SEL strategies.

The second qualitative data tool used was student journals. Student journals gathered data on student perceptions of the SEL intervention and whether students showed improvement in using SEL skills. Students journaled once a week after the SEL lesson. To accommodate for student reading and writing levels students were allowed to draw pictures instead of writing. Table 3 shows the different journal prompts for each classroom.

Table 3

Journal Prompts

Classroom A	This SEL skill made me feel _____.
Classroom B	The SEL skill _____ has helped me _____.
	Using the SEL skill _____ makes me feel _____.

Students explained their thoughts in the journal, and they were not allowed to record one-word answers.

The final qualitative data tool used was an Implementation Lesson Log (Appendix D). Once a week after each lesson, both Researcher A and Researcher B filled out a premade Google form about the SEL lesson. The form included the lesson's date, a description of the SEL lesson,

and an overview of how the researcher thought the lesson went with the students. The lesson log ensured that both researchers used the strategies mentioned from CASEL's SEL framework.

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to address the question: What effects will the teaching of social-emotional skills (SEL) have on negative behaviors? The interventions taught by the researchers included a daily morning meeting that included teaching SEL skills, maintaining and setting classroom rules and routines, and opportunities for student journaling.

The two forms of quantitative data were both recorded on tally mark charts. The researchers created graphs to analyze the data and see any increases or decreases in behaviors. The graphs show both grade levels separately to notice the difference in behaviors between the different grades.

When analyzing the qualitative data, the researchers used the five-step process Hendricks (2013) suggests: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. The qualitative data came from Pre/Post Feedback Forms along with journals. The researchers began by compiling all the data then disassembling it with a common theme. That common theme found categories that are related to each other.

Frequency of Behaviors

The purpose of the quantitative tools was to observe and track the frequency of behaviors. The researchers wanted to find if there was an increase or decrease in the frequency of negative behaviors after the implementation of the intervention. Students received behavior referrals when a student exhibited targeted behaviors defined by the schools' code of conduct. The administration manages behavior referrals, and these referrals stay in the student's file. Table

4 shows the number of behavior referrals from the baseline data, the six weeks of intervention, and the post-baseline data.

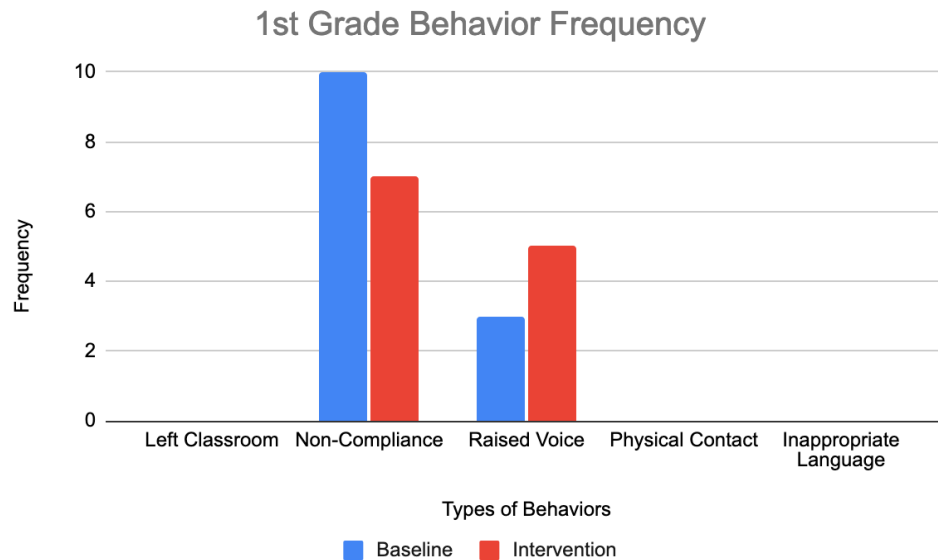
Table 4

Behavior Referrals

	Baseline	Intervention	Post-Baseline	Outcome
Classroom A	0	0	0	0
Classroom B	3	0	0	-3

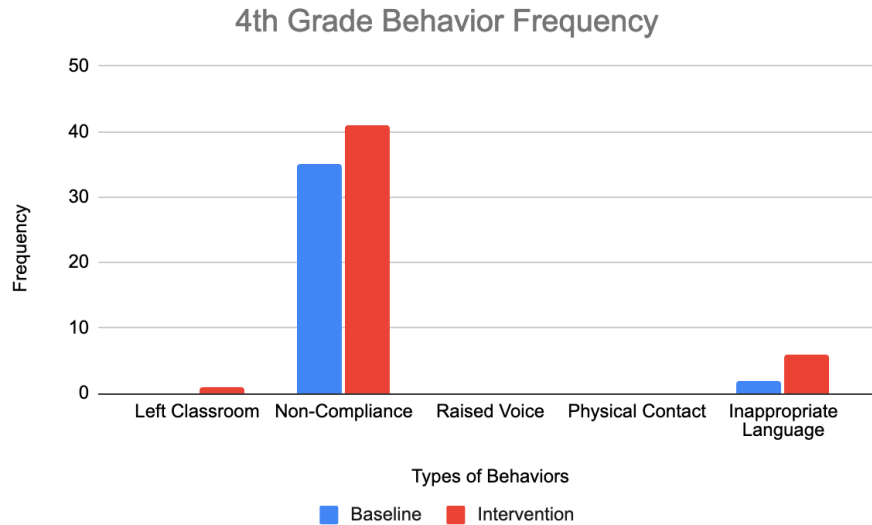
Classroom A had no behavior referrals written during the baseline, intervention, and post-baseline period. Classroom B had three behavior referrals written during the baseline period. One behavior referral was written on September 28, 2020 and two behavior referrals were written on September 30, 2020. All three of the behavior referrals were for non-compliance from the same student. Based on the data, there was no change in classroom A for behaviors; there was a decrease in classroom B behaviors. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the changing of learning models throughout the data collection time, many factors affected the classroom's number of behaviors. Classroom A and B had smaller classroom sizes, and students were required to socially distance themselves throughout the school day.

The researchers used behavior frequency charts to observe if the classroom behaviors increased or decreased during the intervention. The researchers collected data using these charts during the three weeks of baseline and four weeks of intervention. Due to the global pandemic, the researchers did not use the behavior frequency charts during the last two weeks of intervention and the final three weeks of baseline. The researchers used a participation form to collect data during that time. Table 5 outlines the behaviors exhibited in classroom A during the baseline data and first four weeks of intervention.

Table 5*Behavior Frequency Chart - Classroom A*

Shown in Table 5, Classroom A had displayed non-compliance 10 times and raised voice three times during the baseline data collection. During the intervention period, there were seven instances of non-compliance and five instances of a raised voice. Non-compliance had decreased during the intervention, while raised voice showed an increase. One factor to note is that the baseline data occurred for three weeks, while the intervention data was four weeks, giving the data an extra week's worth of behaviors. The data collected is considerably lower than in previous years. Similar factors listed for behavior referrals could also be present here. With the COVID-19 safety procedures, students had to stay at their desks and remain six feet apart all day. There were no transitions to carpets, rotations of groups, or partner work. All of these are factors that could influence behaviors.

Table 6 outlines the behaviors seen in classroom B during the baseline data and first four weeks of intervention.

Table 6*Behavior Frequency Chart - Classroom B*

In table 6, there were zero instances of students leaving the classroom, 35 instances of non-compliance, and two inappropriate language instances during the baseline data collection. During the intervention period, there were 41 instances of non-compliance, one instance of students leaving the classroom, and six inappropriate language instances. In Classroom B, there was a slight increase in behaviors during the intervention period. For both Classrooms A and B, the behavior that occurred most often is non-compliance. Due to social distancing measures students were required to wear masks throughout the day. Of the 41 instances of non-compliance there was one student that struggled with keeping their mask on throughout the day. Mask wearing caused many instances of non-compliance.

Due to the global pandemic, the last two weeks of intervention utilized participation logs for post-baseline data. The data collection method changed due to students learning in the distance learning model and participating in lessons through Google Meet and Seesaw. With this learning model, the behavior frequency chart was not feasible because students did not directly

interact with each other. Participation was determined by students completing activities on Seesaw. The researchers recorded a tally mark for students who completed the Seesaw activity following the researchers' directions. When a student did not finish an activity or follow the directions, the activity received an incomplete. Students had an opportunity to fix their work to be reflected towards the completion rate. Table 7 and Table 8 show graphs of the participation percentages for both classrooms during the intervention and post-baseline.

Table 7

Classroom A - Participation Chart

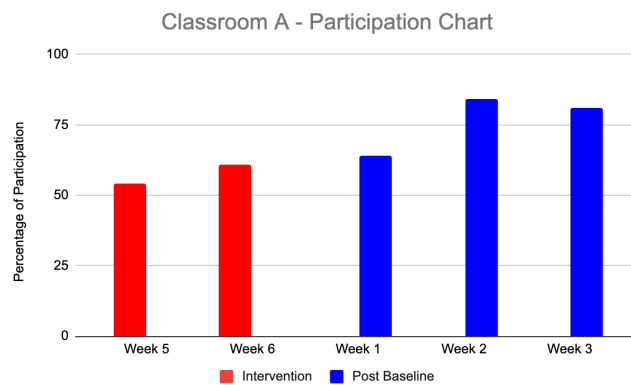
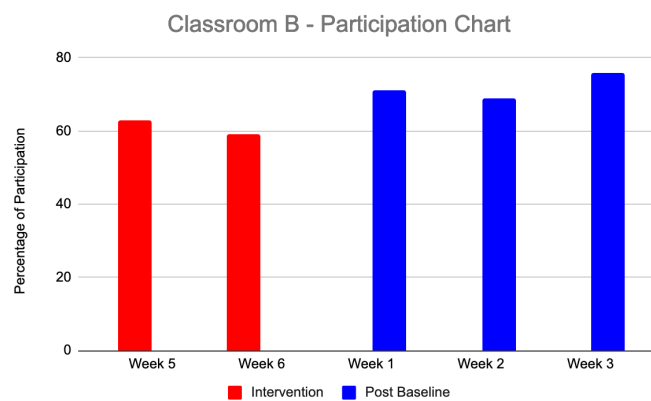


Table 8

Classroom B - Participation Chart



Classroom A had 54% and 61% participation during the final two weeks of the intervention. This was the first time during the school year students in Classroom A were full distance learning and had to rely on their technology devices to learn. Students needed to understand how to use the Seesaw platform to access their learning and complete the activity. On average, students had six to eight Seesaw activities assigned to them each day that needed to be completed. If the students were present at the virtual morning meeting on Google Meet, the researcher could explain each activity to them. Some students had parents, guardians, older siblings, or other adults help them if needed. Other students were left to themselves to complete the activities. Classroom A had an increase in participation percentage for post-baseline data with 64%, 84%, and 81%.

Classroom B had 63% and 59% participation for the last two weeks of the intervention period. There was a slight increase in participation during the post-baseline data collection. Students had a participation percentage of 71%, 69%, and 76% during the last three weeks. Students were in full distance learning during the last five weeks of the research period. Before this period, the students had been learning in a hybrid learning model. Due to hybrid learning, the students had some practice with learning online and using Seesaw.

Student Perceptions

The purpose of student feedback forms was to observe if students believed the skills taught during this intervention had a positive or negative impact. Students completed a Pre/Post Feedback Form (Appendix B) to observe their feelings about their knowledge of SEL skills and their feelings toward the classroom environments. Data from the Pre/Post Feedback Form is represented individually by both classrooms. Students received a score out of 10 based on how many times they agreed with a statement. Table 9 represents data from Classroom A.

Table 9*Pre/Post Feedback - Classroom A*

Student	Pre	Post	Outcome
Student 1	6	7	+1
Student 2	10	10	0
Student 3	10	9	-1
Student 4	10	10	0
Student 5	2	8	+6
Student 6	10	8	-2
Student 7	5	8	+3
Student 8	7	9	+2
Student 9	5	6	+1
Student 10	7	8	+1
Student 11	8	9	+1
Student 12	4	10	+6
Student 13	10	10	0
Student 14	10	10	0
Student 15	8	8	0
Student 16	10	10	0

***Bold represents a positive change*

The outcome shows the positive or negative change in student responses. If a student received a positive outcome score, noted in bold, it meant they self-indicated more agreements at the end of the intervention than they did at the beginning of the intervention. If a student received a negative outcome score, they self-indicated fewer agreements at the end of the intervention than they did at the beginning of the intervention. Some students received an outcome score of

zero. This happened if students had the same number of indicators from the beginning to the end. From the 16 students in classroom A, eight had positive outcomes, six had no change, and two had a negative outcome. Five of the six students who had an outcome of zero self-indicated a score of 10 for both times. The mean of the outcome data represented is +1.1, indicating that most students had a positive increase after the intervention finished. Table 10 represents the same data table for Classroom B.

Table 10*Pre/Post Feedback - Classroom B*

Student	Pre	Post	Outcome
Student 1	8	10	+2
Student 2	7	5	-2
Student 3	10	10	0
Student 4	7	4	-3
Student 5	10	9	-1
Student 6	9	9	0
Student 7	9	10	+1
Student 8	10	10	0
Student 9	7	5	-2
Student 10	7	7	0
Student 11	10	10	0
Student 12	10	10	0
Student 13	5	9	+4
Student 14	9	9	0
Student 15	8	10	+2
Student 16	7	7	0

Student 17	9	7	-2
Student 18	8	8	0
Student 19	8	9	+1
Student 20	10	N/A	0
Student 21	4	5	+1

****Bold represents a positive change**

Of the 21 students in classroom B, six had positive outcomes, 10 had no change, and five had a negative outcome. Four of the 10 students who had an outcome of zero self-indicated a score of 10 for both times. One student did not take the Post Feedback Form. The mean of the outcome data represented is +0.05, indicating that most students had a positive increase after the intervention finished.

Students completed a Post Feedback Form (Appendix C) after the six-week intervention. The purpose of this feedback form was to find what students learned from the intervention. Data is represented by the percentage of students that agreed with each statement. Table 11 shows each question along with the percentage of students who agreed with each statement.

Table 11

Post Feedback Data

	Classroom A	Classroom B
I enjoyed learning about SEL skills.	54%	89%
SEL skills have helped me in school.	72%	83%
Learning SEL skills have helped my relationships with my friends.	81%	67%
Since learning SEL skills, I understand other people better.	72%	72%

Since learning SEL skills, I am better at managing my emotions.	81%	78%
Since learning SEL skills, I resolve conflicts better.	81%	72%
Since learning SEL skills, I make better decisions.	90%	67%
Since learning SEL skills, I know how to apologize better.	81%	83%
Since learning SEL skills, I feel more comfortable in this class.	45%	83%
Since learning SEL skills, I am more responsible in school.	100%	83%

According to Table 11, 54% of students in Classroom A liked learning about SEL skills while 89% of students in classroom B enjoyed learning about it. The highest percentage for Classroom A was the statement, "Since learning SEL skills, I am more responsible in school." All of the students in the class agreed with that statement. Only 45% of Classroom A students said they felt more comfortable in this class since learning about SEL skills. The mean percentage for Classroom A is 75.7% of students agreeing with each statement. The highest percentage for classroom B was the statement, "I enjoyed learning about SEL skills." The lowest percentage for classroom B was for both statements, "Learning SEL skills have helped my relationships with my friends" and "Since learning SEL skills, I make better decisions." The mean percentage of students agreeing with the statements for Classroom B is 77.7% of students, about two-thirds of the class. This feedback form allowed the researchers to understand how the students felt after teaching SEL skills and what the students believed they learned.

The final qualitative data collected was student journals. Students journaled weekly after the SEL lesson. The journals gave the researchers insight into how the SEL lesson made the students feel. The researchers analyzed the journals looking for patterns or outliers in the students' work. Journals were another tool used to see how well the students understood the SEL

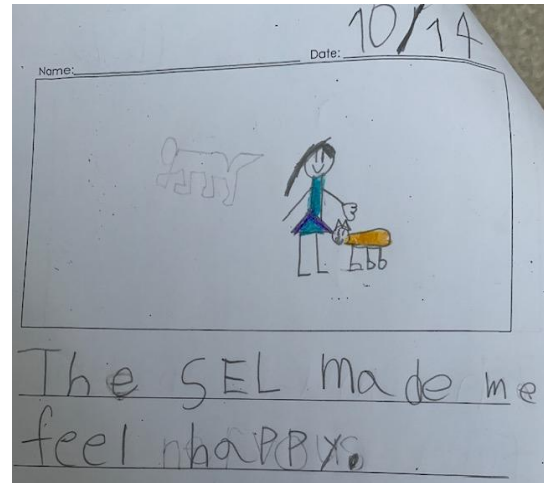
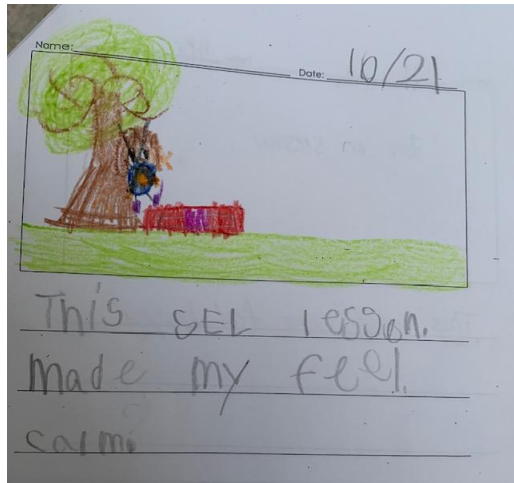
lesson. Table 12 shows the date of the SEL lessons and the CASEL competency associated with that lesson.

Table 12

Lesson Log

Classroom A	Classroom B
1 10/7 What are emotions • Self Awareness	10/6 Positive relationships - Relationship Skills
2 10/14 What are emotions - continued • Self Awareness	10/20 Reading emotions of others - Relationship Skills
3 10/21 How do you respond? • Self Awareness	10/27 Working in a team - Relationship Skills
4 10/28 How do you respond? • Self Awareness	11/3 Empathy for others - Social Awareness
5 11/4 Everyone is Different • Social Awareness	11/10 Positive thinking - Social Awareness Diversity
6 11/18 Everyone is Different • Social Awareness	11/17 Different Perspectives - Social Awareness

Students in Classroom A needed to finish the following sentence, "This SEL lesson made me feel _____. " When students finished their sentence, they drew a picture of something that represented that feeling. Common feelings that students used were happy, calm, and excited. There were a few journals during the intervention that included feelings such as tiredness or sadness. Figures 1, 2, and 3 are journal responses from Classroom A.

Figure 1, 2 and 3 - Classroom A Journal Response

Classroom B completed the statement, "The SEL skill _____ has helped me _____." Using the SEL skill _____ makes me feel _____." Due to the students' differing reading and writing skills in Classroom B, many students struggled with writing or did not understand the prompt. The hybrid learning model presented challenges when students completed journals. Many students did not complete the assignment because they were learning from home. A common theme found when reading the journals was that many students commented on how the SEL skill for that week made them feel happy or great. Some wrote an example of why the skill made them feel happy. Many students did not give a reason why and

the researcher wondered if the students understood the prompt. One student mentioned how they could make new friends from learning about building positive relationships (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 - *Positive Relationships Journal Response*

How has the skill of building positive relationships helped you this week? How did you feel about building positive relationships?
Sentence Starter: Building positive relationships helped me _____. Building positive relationships makes me feel _____.
My journal: building positive relationships helped me to make new friends. building positive relationships makes me feel happy and proud.

During the empathy SEL lesson, one student mentioned that empathy could help them know when someone is feeling sad. This student expressed how they would feel if another person was sad. This student said that showing empathy made them a better friend (see figure 5).

Figure 5 - *Empathy Journal Response*

How has the skill of empathy helped you this week? How does the skill of empathy make you feel?
Sentence Starter: Having empathy has helped me... Having empathy makes me feel...
Having empathy has helped me care about other people feeling. Having empathy makes me feel sorry when people are sad. Having empathy has helped me be a better friend.

Action Plan

The purpose of this research study is to observe what affects daily morning meetings, fostering positive classroom relationships, the teaching of social-emotional learning, and a universal approach had on student behaviors. The research addresses the question: What effects do social-emotional learning strategies have on promoting positive behavior in elementary students?

After analyzing the data collected during this research project, the researchers concluded that weekly social-emotional teaching positively affected students in elementary schools. When looking at data on behavior, the amount of negative behaviors decreased in both classrooms. The number of behavior referrals was low during the study. Classroom B saw an increase in behaviors for non-compliance and inappropriate language. A factor that affected the non-compliance was due to social distancing measures that required students to wear masks. Many students struggled with keeping their masks on throughout the school day.

Participation for the last five weeks of the research increased for both classrooms in the study. Students were more engaged during distance learning compared to when distance learning started. Data from the Post Feedback Form showed the percentage of students self-indicating their agreements with the statements. The results show that students had positive feelings towards the SEL lessons. Most students had a positive increase in their agreement statements about how they feel about school. Overall, most students felt that they had become more responsible in school after learning about the SEL skills.

Recommendations

The implementation of a school-wide SEL curriculum is necessary for student well-being. After completing this research study, both researchers plan to continue teaching

social-emotional skills to their students. SEL needs to be a priority in every classroom to help students learn not only academically but socially as well. “Socially and emotionally competent children tend to be better integrated in the school and classroom context, and can focus on the academic tasks provided to them, compared with children who struggle socially and emotionally” (Oberle, 2016, p. 281). To ensure a school-wide approach there needs to be ongoing professional development to successfully implement SEL in the classroom and the school.

There are many impacts teaching social-emotional skills have on students. As seen in the study, negative behaviors decreased in non-compliance in Classroom A. When behaviors are taken out of the classroom, both the teachers and the students can focus on student learning. Students need emotional skills to be ready to learn. They also need social skills to work with their peers in the classroom. When students have both the emotional, social, and behavior skills there, could be a decrease in mental health issues and an increase in academics. According to Oberle (2016), when students have a greater social and emotional understanding, they can have a healthier mental health status.

Many confounding variables affected the research investigation. The data that was collected does indicate a need for future research on SEL in elementary schools. This study was completed on a small scale within two classrooms. Due to the small size of the study, the findings were limited. If done again, the researchers would push for a large-scale, school-wide investigation to gain a true understanding of the benefits of social-emotional learning.

Another limitation of the study was the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic caused multiple learning model changes throughout the school year. The changes in learning models resulted in a loss of instructional teaching and student learning. Classroom B had less

instructional time due to a hybrid learning model throughout the beginning of the school year. Social distancing protocols were in place this year to accommodate for school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students were required to wear masks and to be socially distanced throughout the day. This drastically changed the delivery of morning meetings and made them less personal. Social distancing measures could have contributed to student stress and anxiety during the school year.

In conclusion, students' well-being needs to be a focus in schools. For the successful implementation of SEL, there should be a positive classroom environment and a universal school-wide approach. Continual professional development on effective strategies for social-emotional learning can strengthen an SEL curriculum. Social-emotional learning is a process that needs to be implemented in the classroom, school, and community to be successful. To ensure that students become productive members of society social-emotional learning should be a priority in all schools.

References

- Banks, T., Sapp, M., & Obiakor, F. E. (2014). Understanding B.F. Skinner: Building emotional competence in students with diverse learning needs. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching, 9*(1), 53–66. <https://doi.org/10.1515/mlt-2013-0021>
- CASEL. (2020). *What is SEL?* Casel.org.
[https://casel.org/what-is-sel/#:~:text=Social%20and%20emotional%20learning%20\(SEL,relationships%2C%20and%20make%20responsible%20decisions.](https://casel.org/what-is-sel/#:~:text=Social%20and%20emotional%20learning%20(SEL,relationships%2C%20and%20make%20responsible%20decisions.)
- Carroll, A., Houghton, S., Forrest, K., Mccarthy, M., & Sanders-O'connor, E. (2020). Who benefits most? Predicting the effectiveness of a social and emotional learning intervention according to children's emotional and behavioural difficulties. *School Psychology International, 41*(3), 197–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034319898741>
- Choi, S., & Kim, Y. (2014). Investigating elementary school children's learning experiences through multicultural chorus activity: SEL approach. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 159*(C), 324–328. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.381>
- Evans, R., Scourfield, J., & Murphy, S. (2015). The unintended consequences of targeting: Young people's lived experiences of social and emotional learning interventions. *British Educational Research Journal, 41*(3), 381–397. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3155>
- Greenberg, D. (2017). Social and Emotional Learning as a Public Health Approach to Education. *The Future of Children, 27*(1), 13–32. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2017.0001>
- Jones, S. M., Barnes, S. P., Bailey, R., & Doolittle, E. J. (2017). Promoting social and emotional competencies in elementary school. *The Future of Children, 27*(1), 49–72.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2017.0003>
- Kasler, J., & Elias, M. J. (2012). Holding the line: Sustaining an SEL-driven whole-school

- approach in a time of transition. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 22(3), 227–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2012.706130>
- Low, S., Cook, C. R., Smolkowski, K., & Buntain-Ricklefs, J. (2015). Promoting social–emotional competence: An evaluation of the elementary version of Second Step®. *Journal of School Psychology*, 53(6), 463–477. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2015.09.002>
- McClelland, M. M., Tominey, S. L., Schmitt, S. A., & Duncan, R. (2017). SEL interventions in early childhood. *The Future of Children*, 27(1), 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2017.0002>
- McClelland, M. M., Tominey, S. L., Schmitt, S. A., Hatfield, B. E., Purpura, D. J., Gonzales, C. R., & Tracy, A. N. (2019). Red light, purple light! Results of an intervention to promote school readiness for children from low-income backgrounds. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 23–65. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02365>
- McKevitt, B. (2012). School psychologists’ knowledge and use of evidence-based, social-emotional learning interventions. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 16(1), 33–45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03340974>
- McKown, C. (2017). Social-emotional assessment, performance, and standards. *The Future of Children*, 27(1), 157–178. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2017.0008>
- Mendelson, T., Tandon, S. D., O’Brennan, L., Leaf, P. J., & Ialongo, N. S. (2015). Brief report: Moving prevention into schools: The impact of a trauma-informed school-based intervention. *Journal of Adolescence*, 43, 142–147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.05.017>
- Nickerson, A. B., Fredrick, S. S., Allen, K. P., & Jenkins, L. N. (2019). Social emotional learning (SEL) practices in schools: Effects on perceptions of bullying victimization. *Journal of School Psychology*, 73, 74–88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.03.002>

- Oberle, E., Domitrovich, C. E., Meyers, D. C., & Weissberg, R. P. (2016). Establishing systemic social and emotional learning approaches in schools: A framework for school-wide implementation. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 46*(3), 277–297.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2015.1125450>
- Plumb, J., Bush, K., & Kersevich, S. (2016). Trauma-sensitive schools: An evidence-based approach. *School Social Work Journal, 40*(2), 37–60. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1789702716/>
- Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Oberle, E., Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T. F., & Diamond, A. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social–emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial. *Developmental Psychology, 51*(1), 52–66.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038454>
- Schonert-Reichl, K. (2017). Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers. *The Future of Children, 27*(1), 137–155. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2017.0007>
- Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. *Child Development, 88*(4), 1156–1171.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12864>
- Tough, P. (2013). *How children succeed: Grit, curiosity, and the hidden power of character*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Yang, C., Bear, G. G., & May, H. (2018). Multilevel associations between school-wide Social–emotional learning approach and student engagement across elementary, middle, and high schools. *School Psychology Review, 47*(1), 45–61.
[doi:http://dx.doi.org.pearl.stkate.edu/10.17105/SPR-2017-0003.V47-1](http://dx.doi.org.pearl.stkate.edu/10.17105/SPR-2017-0003.V47-1)

Appendix A - Behavior Frequency Chart

Date: _____

Behavior Frequency Chart

Student	Left Classroom	Non-compliance	Raised voice	Physical Contact/Aggression	Inappropriate Language
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
13.					
14.					
15.					















Definitions of Behaviors:

- Left Classroom: Student leaves the group without permission and will not come back after 1 prompt.
- Non-compliance: Refusing to follow adult directions after 1 warning/prompt
- Raised Voice: Yelling or aggressive tone, arguing
- Physical Contact/Aggression: any physical contact with an intent to cause harm
- Inappropriate Language: name-calling, swear words, hurtful words, any words that are inappropriate for school, Inappropriately using words directed toward another person

Appendix B - Pre/Post Feedback Form

Pre/Post-Feedback Form





















Please answer these questions as honestly as possible. To answer a question circle the face that best describes how you feel about it.

	Yes/ Agree	No/Disagree
I feel comfortable in this class.		
The teacher in this class cares about me.		
I get along well with other people.		
I try not to interrupt when someone else is telling me something.		
I work hard to be a good student.		
If a friend was sad, I would try to understand why they were sad.		
When I get angry, I can calm myself down.		
If I do something that upsets someone, I apologize.		
If I see someone else being teased or picked on, I try to help that person.		
When something is hard, I keep trying.		


Appendix C - Post Feedback Form

Post-Feedback Form

Please answer these questions as honestly as possible. To answer a question circle the face that best describes how you feel about it.

	Yes/ Agree	No/Disagree
I enjoyed learning about SEL skills.		
SEL skills have helped me in school.		
Learning SEL skills have helped my relationships with my friends.		
Since learning SEL skills I understand other people better.		
Since learning SEL skills I am better at managing my emotions.		
Since learning SEL skills I resolve conflicts better.		
Since learning SEL skills I make better decisions.		
Since learning SEL skills I know how to apologize better.		
Since learning SEL skills I feel comfortable in this class.		
Since learning SEL skills I am more responsible in school.		

Appendix D - Implementation of Lesson Plan Log



Implementation of Lesson Plan Log

* Required

Name *

Your answer _____

Date

Your answer _____

Name of Lesson

Your answer _____

Lesson Overview

Your answer _____

Reflection on Lesson

Your answer _____

Submit