Southeastern University

FireScholars

Fall 2021

TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION AND APPLICATION OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING TRAINING IN THE CLASSROOM

Ricky Pierre
Southeastern University - Lakeland

TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION AND APPLICATION OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

LEARNING TRAINING IN THE CLASSROOM

By

RICKY PIERRE

A doctoral dissertation submitted to the
College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Education
in Organizational Leadership

Southeastern University
November, 2021

TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION AND APPLICATION OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

LEARNING TRAINING IN THE CLASSROOM

by

RICKY PIERRE

Dissertation Approved:

_____

Karen Ingle, Ed.D., Dissertation Chair

_____

Thomas Gollery, Ed.D., Committee Member

_____

Carolyn Reid-Brown, Ph.D., Committee Member

_____

James Shuls, Ph.D., Dean, College of Education

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I want to give all the glory to God All Mighty because this accomplishment would not have been possible without Him. He has placed vital individuals along the way to love, support, and help me through this process. My wife, Dr. Jessica A. Pierre, has been a strong pillar I continue to lean on to keep pushing forward. My progenitures, Rebecca A. Pierre and Alexander Pierre have become a great source of motivation to me. My parents, Job P. Pierre and Rita Pierre have instilled that fire in me to help educate the next generation and continue to be strong God-fearing examples in my life. My siblings, Ralph E. Pierre and Ritsza C. Pierre, have provided immeasurable support along the way. And finally, my friends, too many to list, who have constantly pushed me to be the best version of myself. To all of you, thank you, and may the Lord continue to bless you and guide you along your journeys.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The doctoral journey, although challenging, was a constant grinding and sharpening process in different subjects and areas of life. This refining process would not have been possible without the mentorship and guidance of many individuals here at SEU and elsewhere. To my dissertation team, Dr. Ingle, Dr. Gollery, and Dr. Reid-Brown: this accomplishment would have been more challenging without your expert guidance every step of the way. I cannot forget the following professors from whom I have learned and acquired different skills and perspectives in each course taken: Dr. Henderson, Dr. Anderson, Dr. Yates, and Dr. Deck. To the entire faculty members who helped smoothen the doctoral journey as well, thank you. Lastly, my mentors who have taken me under their wings, I thank you for believing in my potential and pushing me to sharpen my skills.

Abstract

Social-emotional learning (SEL) has become a part of education to enhance learning by catering to students' personal and social advancement. Unlike many other districts, this local district has pushed for a more unified process to implement SEL in the classrooms. The implementation of SEL varies from one district to another. However, a factor to SEL's successful implementation is adequate training for classroom teachers. Another factor that affects its implementation is the perception with which classroom teachers apply the concepts acquired from the training. The research data highlights the benefits of SEL effectively implemented at the classroom level. Classroom teachers are the first line of contact with students, and their perception on SEL in the classroom should be valued. The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental study was to evaluate elementary teachers' implementation and application in the classroom of the school district's SEL curriculum and to assess teacher confidence in the program. Classroom teachers (n = 201) responded to an electronic survey measuring their perception on SEL training concepts. Findings revealed there was a significant difference in perceptions between teachers who apply SEL training concepts in the classroom and those who did not. Additionally, teachers who had a positive perception of the concepts learned in district training sessions reported a higher perception of preparedness for SEL implementation in the classroom.

*Keyword*s: social-emotional learning, educational leadership, teachers' perceptions, student achievement, teacher training

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

I. INTRODUCTION

The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) faces many challenges with providing adequate services for different populations and satisfying the demands that surround diverse communities. The government's challenges to provide the proper educational accommodations for students and families in need are different in each geographical location. However, one common obstacle is the growing need for resources to help decrease classroom behaviors that cause interruptions during instructional time in the classroom setting. These adverse behaviors demonstrated primarily by children from dysfunctional backgrounds have sparked multiple intervention-based approaches to increase student engagement and student achievement (Karatekin, 2018). The public-school education system is responsible for ensuring that all students' legal right to receive adequate and holistic education is enforced despite all the challenges.

A new direction adopted in education is character development or character-building lessons within the primary curriculum (Graczyk et al., 2000). The approach includes more than the main subjects that address the academic portion of the students' development. In addition to tending to educational needs, the primary curriculum is used to increase students' soft skills. Unfortunately, this process is not a simple task. Despite embedded breaks in the sessions, the intent to implement SEL lessons seems to stall. The lack of buy-in to the process is evident in primary and secondary schools (Erford, 2015). With a system focused on student achievement,

which is defined mainly through test results, keeping students engaged is fundamental to increasing motivation and success outputs, at least in school assessments. The most recent movement towards a holistic approach to education bridged the gap for students who may have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (Karatekin, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic, a more recent challenge, has increased the need for an empathic approach to educating students, especially in Title I schools (Miotto et al., 2020). Current researchers determined a higher manifestation rate of ACEs in students coming from lower socio-economic households, which constitute the communities in which Title I schools exist (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018).

Social-emotional learning (SEL) has been one of the main courses of action in many school districts. SEL is the process through which an individual masters his emotions (Yang et al., 2018). Yang et al. (2018) added that SEL teaches individuals five interconnected keys described as skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. The importance of such exposure has many school districts under the FLDOE umbrella changing their curriculum to include SEL effectively (Erford, 2015). As a result, school districts drafted plans to improve the implementation and training sessions to increase classroom empathy. The inclusion of SEL content within a classroom seems to be the correct initiative to lean towards greater student engagement (Jenson et al., 2004).

Background of the Study

According to the FLDOE data collection reports, the PK-12 schools in a local school district are predominantly attended by students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds. As reported by a local school district data record, the elementary schools' population demographic shows a predominance of schools that qualify as Title I due to more than 75% of the population of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, mirroring the

community's constituents (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The lower SES presents a different set of challenges with a higher probability of ACEs within the student population. This data highlights the needs within the district's institutions and each facility. The local school district created an intervention plan to raise its community involvement, hoping this initiative will increase student achievement, as well as a strategic plan to improve specific areas, such as the calculated integration of SEL within the primary curriculum for the next couple of years.

The decision to create a strategic plan came from past incidents across the nation, including school shootings, which initiated several laws and regulations to increase schools' safety (Müller & Antoni, 2020). The decision to enhance public safety included strategic mental health plans to increase social-emotional awareness in students, teachers, and all staff, specifically in primary and secondary school environments (Müller & Antoni, 2020). These initiatives also included releasing necessary funding for social-emotional curriculum and allowed school districts to interpret these mandates appropriately and respectively to the needs of communities they served.

The responsibility to brainstorm and plan the proper implementation fell on district leaders and mental health professionals in the district. The provision for social-emotional targets in the primary curriculum created an opening in the instructional time for teachers to model and share social-emotional lessons in the classroom. Educational leaders turn to SEL to reinforce emotional regulation in students and staff (American School Counseling Association, 2012). The focus shifted to helping students master and regulate their emotions while learning essential life skills rather than learning to behave in a specific environment (Bohanon et al., 2018; Erford, 2015). The local school district counseling department shared a survey result showing a lack of consistency in implementing positive behavior intervention system (PBIS) methods due to a lack

of trust in their purpose. Forty percent of teachers thought PBIS was ineffective before starting the process (Bohanon et al., 2018). Therefore, the lack of consistency could be associated with the lack of buy-in to PBIS.

Implementing SEL content in the local school district must be done with fidelity to evaluate students' effects and classroom climate. Teachers' mindsets and classroom climate influence implementing an SEL curriculum (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). The content delivery depends highly on those who have the most interactions with students and generally a more significant relational influence on students and teachers (Sullivan, 2016). Integrating mindset and SEL lessons can help students increase academic achievement and willingness to learn (Boylan et al., 2018). The current trend of the growth mindset in education, a mindset that embraces space for continuous improvement, leads to many field changes, especially on the primary and secondary levels (Fraser, 2018; Ng, 2018).This mindset can be beneficial to both sides of the spectrum when servicing and accommodating students in general. The lessons incorporated will include the five corresponding SEL keys and practical ways to apply them, including practice and repetition. This study explored some of the relational impacts of consistent SEL content within the curriculum between teachers, students, and school staff.

The different inconsistencies in how the student receives SEL intervention can be significant. Some students are exposed to SEL through role modeling; others are taught SEL through formal lessons. A student who has experienced ACEs in his life does not have the same predisposition as a student whose basic needs are met (Seaman et al., 2017). Berman (2018) shared that promoting a safe climate for students helps them take appropriate risks with their environment, make mistakes, collaborate, and receive support. The ability to develop empathy

4

and understand the importance of the common good helps students develop healthy relationships

and engage in their surroundings and community (Berman, 2018).

Figure 1

Conceptualization Framework of SEL Implementation.
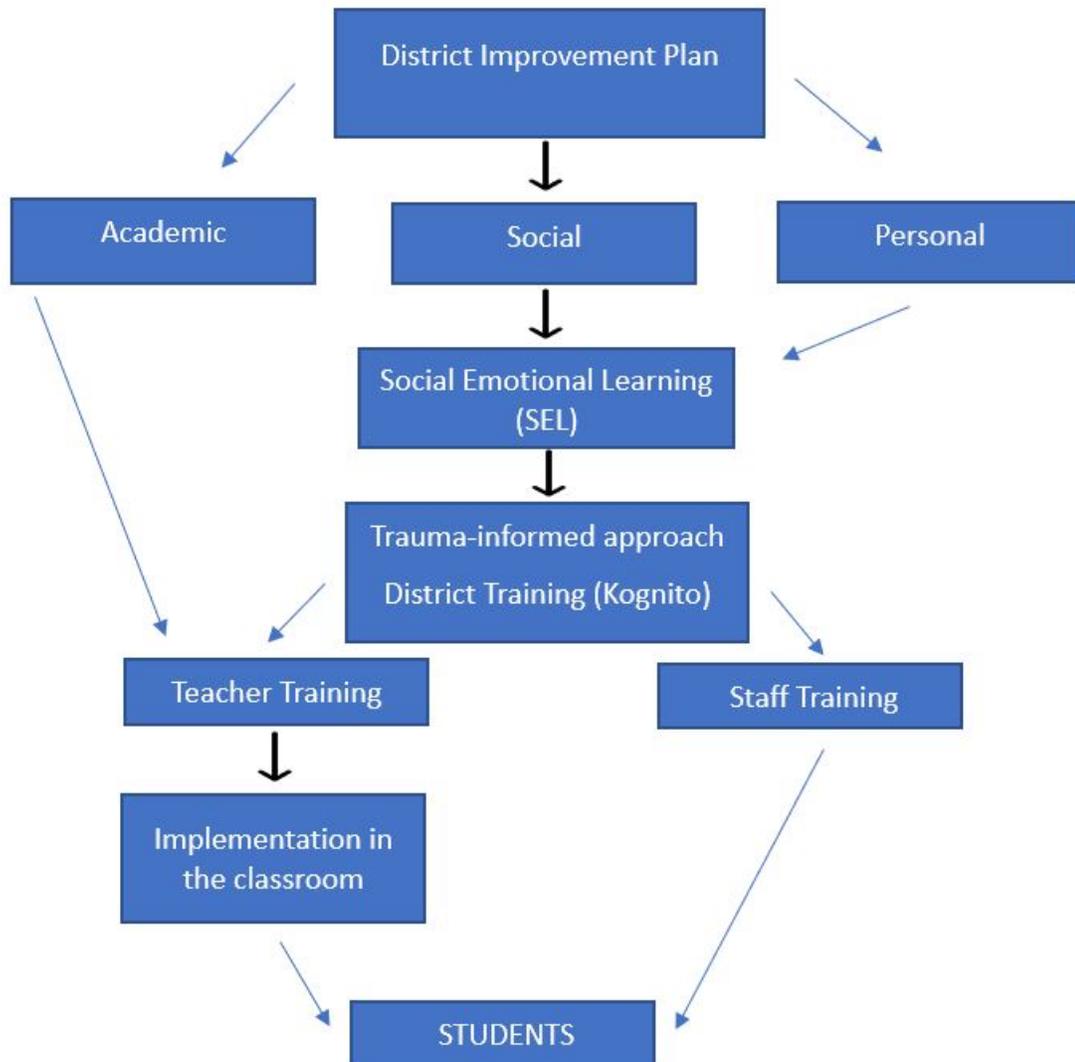
Although responsible for most decisions, educational leaders have a limited classroom

effect compared to classroom teachers (Caldarella et al., 2017). Perception may have a

relationship with motivation, thus the dilemma of increasing the effectiveness of SEL while

decreasing personal influence (Sullivan, 2016). Mental models and perceptions affect the choices an individual makes daily and, although the effects are not entirely known, perception impacts motivation (Muller & Antoni, 2020). An individual who is forced to execute a task rather than choosing it may lack the desire to complete the task efficiently.

To reach the goals mentioned through SEL, all individuals in the school system must be adequately trained and willing to implement social-emotional concepts within the classroom correctly. Recent research findings revealed that SEL training elevated teachers' awareness of students' feelings, thoughts, and actions (Sullivan, 2016). Therefore, teachers' implementation of SEL in the classroom is affected by their perception of the training and their personal experiences (Bates & Jacobs, 2020).

History and Related Theories

Social-emotional learning stemmed from a holistic approach suggested by Plato to the republic in ancient Greece, further explained by his ideology of maintaining an efficient curriculum in education and producing good character citizens (Crandall et al., 2020)**.** The overall thought was to prepare children from early childhood to become productive members of society. Plato's concept has been recognized universally and continues to influence educational curriculum.

More recently, around 1970, the impact of James Comer's study described through a 1988 *Scientific American* article left an impression on the educational approach concerning behaviors in general (Comer, 1988). The study focused on the contrast between a child's experiences at home versus in school, and Karatekin (2018) pinned the descriptive methods as behavioral observation. The descriptive behavior observation methods emphasized how the experiences in the immediate environment (home) may have a more significant effect on a secondary

environment (school), adding a million triggers that may exist and are unrecognized in the secondary context (Karatekin, 2018).

Additionally, Domjan et al. (2000) popularized this method through behavioristic approaches. Animal behavior, which paved the way for behavioristic sciences on human interactions, was studied previously through the lenses and context of ecological and biological perspectives (Domjan et al., 2000). At the time, the psychological scientific process lacked credibility and popularity, thus the push for the observational method within the science (Schultz & Schultz, 2016). The observational method became popular in the field, allowing for more data on human behavior (Domjan et al., 2000). Domjan et al. (2000) could not disregard the genetically based theories to find out more about the students' experience at home and school. Domjan et al. (2000) focused on finding factors that motivated behaviors or correlated to individuals' actions with their environments. The interaction between an individual and their environment is at the base of understanding the ecological impacts on both, the individual and the environment. This notion led to understanding the importance of including materials that address more than just the child's academic portion (Hart et al., 2020). Pavlov shared that an individual's conditioning involved conditioned and unconditioned stimulus (Domjan et al., 2000).

Another significant contribution that highly influenced SEL is Maslow's theory of self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). In this theory, Maslow introduced three self-actualization levels through a pyramidal shape view model, hierarchy of needs, and early years of life. Crandall et al. (2020) shared that Maslow's hierarchy of needs used an ecological approach compared to a biological one and included overlapping stages. The theory examines the person's needs by emphasizing the factors that influence the individual's life, such as family, family social-

economic status, family stressors, and connection between the family dynamics. Additional factors included in the process are the community and the perceived impacts on the individual (Crandall et al., 2020). The theory emphasizes the need for the individual to attain actualization in certain areas to become a balanced and productive member of society. As Dominguez and Carton (1997) described, Maslow's pyramid contains the basic needs in the bottom tiers. The bottom layer includes the physiological needs (i.e., food, water, warmth, rest), and the top the safety needs (i.e., security and safety). The second level contains the physiological conditions. The bottom tier encompasses belongingness and love (intimate relationships, friends), and the top layer includes esteem needs (prestige and feeling of accomplishment). The top of the pyramid is self-actualization, reached when the bottom tiers are fulfilled (Dominguez & Carton, 1997). The connection with SEL is that when a level is unfulfilled, the individual may seek to make up for it in other unhealthy ways (Dominguez & Carton, 1997; Domjan et al., 2000).

Social-Emotional Learning

The importance of SEL is increasingly evident because these concepts help students better deal with the everyday stressors encountered ecologically, specifically in the classroom environment (Caldarella et al., 2017a). SEL is defined as the process of providing all children and adolescents with the opportunities to learn, acquire, and practice the social-emotional competencies needed to succeed in life (Oberle et al., 2016, p. 279). Oberle et al. (2016) showed the need for a different approach to what causes classroom disruptions and a challenge to increase instructional time. With the increasing demands in school districts, the problems have become more significant for Title I schools, schools with more than 75% of students receive free or reduced lunch meals (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

In 1994, the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) introduced five core competencies to clarify SEL's goals and objectives. These competencies surround the SEL process: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills (Oberle et al., 2016). The five segments of SEL describe the interaction and include overlapping layers with the competencies as influencers. These five competencies are an essential part of primary and secondary school education (Oberle et al., 2016). The skills can be adapted for diverse communities and adjusted depending on the specific needs of that community. Oberle et al. (2016) described the competencies as follows.

The first competency, self-awareness, is recognizing one's own emotions, thoughts, and impact on one's behavior (Oberle et al., 2016). This competency includes knowing one's challenges and strengths while being aware of personal goals and core values. The self-aware individual recognizes that the impact of thoughts, feelings, and actions is connected. For example, if an individual is frustrated, he must acknowledge his short fuse in the moment of frustration. Recognizing and handling these moments help the individual increase self-awareness (Oberle et al., 2016).

The second competency, self-management, promotes regulating one's emotions, thoughts, and actions. The individual is able to self-manage effectively, demonstrates the ability to deal with impulse control in stressful situations, and is self-motivated in pursuing academic goals. For example, a student faces some difficult times and can show poise while dealing with the stressors. This student has embraced the self-management competency and used the proper skills to ensure appropriate behaviors (Oberle et al., 2016).

The third competency, social awareness, is the ability to accept the views and perspectives of others. Oberle et al. (2016) added that the individual practicing social awareness

could allow people from different backgrounds and cultures to display empathy with others. For example, if a student can process and accept his classmates' differences without bashing, demeaning, or teasing the classmate in question, this student used the tools acquired to remain socially aware.

The fourth competency, relationship skills, is the competency needed to form and maintain healthy relationships. This competency provides communication skills, conflict resolution skills, active listening skills, and guidelines to seek help when needed. A clear example of a student exhibiting this competency is a student conducting a mediation between two other classmates and encouraging them to listen to each other (Oberle et al., 2016).

The fifth competency, responsible decision-making, is a tool that would enable students to make constructive and respectful choices with behavior and interactions. This individual is capable of age-appropriate maturity to remain safe through thoughts and actions with self and others. For example, a student who acquired those skills can differentiate between safe and unsafe situations (Oberle et al., 2016).

As part of the SEL content, the competencies are surrounded by the three influential layers: home and communities, schools, and classrooms (Oberle et al., 2016). The purpose and goals of implementation are equally crucial to the process in addition to the five skills. The three layers include the different approaches experienced by each individual, which researchers described as approaches used by individuals and factors that impact individuals directly (Domjan et al., 2000). The Pavlovian theory on systems and their fluidity attest to the various factors that may affect individuals and modify behavior. These factors are the following: (a) classroom curriculum and instruction; (b) school climate, policies, and practices; and (c) family and

community partnerships (Oberle et al., 2016). Researchers suggested that these factors impact SEL curriculum implementation and effectiveness (Elias, 2009; Oberle et al., 2016).

Implementation of Social-Emotional Learning

CASEL (2000) suggested that schools applied SEL in two different ways: a preventive tool to help students cope with daily stressors and a competence-building tool to build character among students. Educational leaders must be aware of the factors involved in these tools. As mentioned in previous sections, the relationship between educators and students can be an advantage and an extrinsic motivation for students to devote time and effort in applying concepts received from instructors (Ngoh, 2018). Additionally, the relational approach suggests that the educator embrace SEL's notions to display role modeling to increase all students' impact (Shao & Müller, 2011). With consistency, training, and adequate preparation, educators must follow the SEL resources guidelines and incorporate them into their classroom culture. Through this action, CASEL shared that the SEL contents are impactful at every level (Oberle et al., 2016).

The Theory of Action

The theory of action (TOA) is the effort for CASEL to encourage uniformity from the state level in which these concepts originate to the classrooms. As described by Mahoney et al., (2020), the state TOA is organized into four focus areas that match the school district's theory of action. These four areas of focus are: (a) build foundational support and plan; (b) strengthen adult SEL competencies and capacities; (c) promote SEL for and with students; and (d) reflect on data for continuous improvement (Mahoney et al., 2020).

Building foundational support and an SEL plan includes creating a working group that promotes SEL, academics, and equity among all public education levels (Hunter et al., 2018). Mahoney et al. (2020) added that this area focuses on developing a shared vision, assessing the

needs and resources, and making SEL a priority in all levels of educational campuses. Strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacities is one of the most critical focus areas tied to this study. This area includes developing staff expertise on SEL, creating conditions and structures for professional learning systems to promote SEL, and promoting equity through SEL to foster success for all students in the workforce, relationships, and civic life (Mahoney et al., 2020).

The third area of focus involves promoting SEL for and with students, including supporting the implementation of PreK-12 SEL competencies through evidence-based programs (Mahoney et al., 2020). The last focus area, reflecting on data for continuous improvement, involves data-based decision-making to increase the effectiveness of the SEL chosen curriculum (Erford, 2015).

Problem Statement

Teachers play an essential part in the nation's future, and their perceptions of SEL can influence its effectiveness. In the past decade, incorporating SEL into the curriculum has become a common goal among educators to alleviate some of the stressors faced in today's education field (Oberle et al., 2016). Teachers can ensure a better disposition and more positive approach towards the profession's demanding requirements by incorporating healthy habits and reducing stressors associated with the day-to-day duties. Helping teachers carry out their teaching tasks should be one of the main focuses to produce future citizens of high quality (Pawlo et al., 2019). The initiative of SEL includes adequately preparing teachers for their assignments. Educator training precedes teachers' perception of SEL, which directly influences their willingness to use the techniques learned (Sullivan, 2016).

One of the main objectives in education is to ensure high retention rates among students of essential components in the chosen curriculum (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). However, educational leaders must address the loss of instructional time due to behavioral classroom disruptions and intervention plans to prevent challenges faced in the public education setting. Educational leaders organize many teachers' opportunities to increase their classroom management skills through professional development (Papay et al., 2017). Teachers reported an extremely high stress level related to their profession and daily challenges (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). These results are from reports before the COVID-19 pandemic, which added stress in primary and secondary educational facilities (Rettie & Daniels, 2020). Schonert-Reichl (2017) added that teachers' high level of stress is contagious to the classroom environment. If teachers cannot effectively implement the academic curriculum, including social-emotional learning, how can students develop their emotional resiliency?

According to Oberle et al. (2016), most teachers in grades K-12 believe that SEL content and skills are teachable (Oberle et al., 2016). The core SEL competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, help students master essential tasks in school and life (Graczyk et al., 2000; Oberle et al., 2016). Schonert-Reichl (2017) suggested that SEL has many positive influences on educational outcomes, including school attendance and graduation, standardized test scores, and overall academic performance, post-secondary readiness, and citizenship. Teachers' perceptions in the classroom directly influence the likelihood of attaining these benefits. As Oberle et al. (2016) shared, the implementation of SEL needs fidelity and consistency. Additionally, teachers' readiness to teach and model SEL competencies influence the classroom (Caldarella et al., 2017a). The disposition with which teachers promote SEL content influences how students

embrace the core SEL competencies. A strong will and positive approach must exist, and teachers must be on board with implementing various interventions and evidence-based SEL (Bohanon et al., 2018). The goal of implementing an evidence based SEL curriculum comes with challenges. However, one of the first steps is to ensure a strong buy-in from the individuals implementing the curriculum. Buy-in, in this case, includes intentional demonstration of SEL content. Teachers' perceptions are crucial to increase efficiency and encourage healthy positive outcomes (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015).

Schonert-Reichl (2017) shared that implementing an SEL curriculum takes time, energy, commitment, and a team approach. The lack of research on teacher perceptions of SEL and their preparedness to teach SEL in their classroom is a concern and creates a challenge in genuine feedback designed to improve the process. Without feedback, how can the educational leader improve the quality of training for teachers. According to a survey conducted in 2004 and 2012, the percentage of teachers who reported very low job autonomy increased from 18% to 26% (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Therefore, having a curriculum that would give the teachers flexibility in implementation would increase the sense of belonging and job autonomy. Based on SEL's benefits for students, studying teachers' effectiveness should be an area of focus. The quantitative approach used in this study allowed the researcher to analyze the differences in efficiency between SEL-proficient teachers and non-SEL-proficient teachers.

The first step to implementing a curriculum should be to adequately train the individuals in direct contact with the students and collect their feedback of their experience. This step would help teachers gain a certain level of autonomy and belongingness, consequently increasing willingness and motivation to successfully implement the curriculum in creative ways (Oberle et al., 2016). Teachers' perceptions on the matter of SEL implementation may influence their

perspectives on SEL implementation. This study emphasized the teacher's perspectives of SEL and applications. Additionally, this quantitative study allowed for future emphasis on better ways to address classroom management or disruptions through SEL. This study helped primary educational leaders understand teachers' perceptions of nuances in training and their impact on the classroom and create more effective professional development opportunities for teachers and staff. Finally, the study provided feedback that may ensure the most appropriate interpretation of the Florida statute on emotional support in Title XLVII, Chapter 1006, K-20 Education Code.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental study was to evaluate elementary teachers' perceived implementation and application in the classroom of the local school district's social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and to assess teacher confidence in applying those principles effectively.

Overview of Methodology

Research Questions

The study addressed elementary classroom teachers' perceptions of preparedness and the differences that may or may not exist between the perceptions. Social-emotional learning, although common in education, is not a concept that can easily be implemented. The effort requires commitment, which starts with the perception of the teachers.

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. To what degree do study participants perceive they are implementing SEL training concepts within their classroom?

2. Considering the elements of SEL identified in the training module, in which elements were the greatest degree of difference between the teachers who applied the SEL elements on a regular basis and those teachers who did not?

Research Hypotheses

1. To what degree do study participants perceive they are implementing SEL training concepts within their classroom?

   H_a: The degree of implementation will be manifested at a statistically significant degree beyond *sometimes* on the response scale.

2. Considering the elements of SEL identified in the training module, in which elements were the greatest degree of difference between the teachers who applied the SEL elements on a regular basis and those teachers who did not?

   H_a: The survey item, "I promote Social-Emotional Learning in the classroom setting," will reflect the greatest degree of response effect favoring study participants who regularly apply SEL training principles in the classroom setting.

Overview of Analyses

This study is a quantitative and non-experimental research design, utilizing a survey research methodology approach to address the topic and research problem (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). In the absence of an existing, standardized research instrument to assess the study's construct, the study's research instrument was research created, using subject matter expert (SME) agreed-upon themes to generate survey items to be used for study purposes. Instrument validation was conducted in three distinct phases and conducted at both the study's priori and posterior stages. The survey instrument, a 5-point, Likert-scaled survey (Dillman et al., 2014), comprised 12 to 15 closed-response items. Study participants were offered the option of

uncertain within the survey's scale (Willits et al., 2016). Study data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistical techniques using the 27th version of IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Sample Size Estimation: Statistical Power Analyses

In research question one, a one sample *t test* was used for statistical significance testing purposes. Power analysis for a one sample *t test* was conducted using the G-POWER platform to determine a sufficient sample size using an alpha of $p = 0.05$ and a power $(1 - \beta)$ index of 0.80. Based on the assumptions mentioned above, the desired sample size was 15 for an anticipated large effect ($d = .80$). For an anticipated medium effect ($d = .50$), the desired sample size was 34 (Faul et al., 2008).

In research question two, a simple linear regression was used for statistical significance testing purposes in the predictive modeling process. Using the simple linear regression statistical technique, a power analysis was conducted using the G-POWER platform to determine a sufficient sample size using an alpha of $p = 0.05$ and a power $(1 - \beta)$ index of 0.80. Based on the assumptions mentioned above, the desired sample size was 25 for a large effect ($f^2 = .35$). For an anticipated medium effect ($f^2 = .15$), the desired sample size was 55 (Faul et al., 2008).

Research Instrument Validation

The validity of data produced using the study's research instrument was first addressed through a subjective, content validity judgment process (Burns & Grove, 2005). Subjective judgment is generally understood as a process whereby informed persons, called experts, give an opinion or estimate based on intuition and guessing (Miranda, 2001) in the absence of objective data. Using experts (SMEs), the subjective judgment process provided the themes that formed the survey items reflected in the study's research instrument.

In the second phase of the research instrument validation process, Cronbach's alpha (α) was evaluated to determine the instrument's internal reliability of pilot study participant response. The pilot study represented in the second phase of the instrument validation process was conducted by administering the research instrument to 25 study participants. An alpha level of at least $\alpha = .70$ was sought during the second phase of the research instrument validation process. If the $\alpha = .70$ level in the second phase of research instrumentation were not obtained, item analysis would be conducted to determine which item(s) may have required refining or complete removal from the study's research instrument.

In the third phase of instrument validation, the posterior phase of research instrument validation, Cronbach's alpha (α) was again used to assess participant responses' internal reliability to survey items once study data were collected and recorded. Cronbach alpha levels of $\alpha \geq .80$ were considered very good, and levels of $\alpha \geq .90$ were considered excellent (George & Mallery, 2018).

Data Analysis: Preliminary and Research Questions

Preliminary, foundational analyses were conducted before the analytic response to the study's two primary research questions. Evaluations of missing data, internal reliability, and demographic identifying information were conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

The one sample *t* test was conducted for research question one, and a simple linear regression was conducted for research question two. The threshold value for statistical significance of finding was established at $p \leq .05$. The Cohen's d statistical technique was used to assess the magnitude of study participant response effect to research question one. The r^2 value achieved in research question two represented the basis for associative/predictive

assessment of effect. The effect size conventions of Sawilowsky (2009) were adopted for use for interpretative purposes in research questions one and two.

Ethical Consideration

Before conducting this study, proper institutional review board (IRB) approvals were acquired. After receiving the appropriate approvals, the researcher contacted participants, disclosed the study's purpose, assured the voluntary nature of participation, discovered any differences that needed to be respected, and obtained informed consent (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher assured participants' anonymity and confidentiality by assigning numbers to participants. Records remained secure on a password-protected computer. Because of the study's sensitive nature, the researcher took precautions regarding who had access to the information other than the dissertation advisors.

Limitations

A cross-sectional study tends to be ineffective in understanding developing trends over time (Mills & Gay, 2016). Additionally, this study was not longitudinal; cross-sectional studies fail to provide a broad perspective to inform decisions (Mills & Gay, 2016). Because of this study's nature, the results served primarily as a gateway to understanding how to ameliorate classroom cultures and SEL implementation plans in the school district.

Although this study provided much-needed information on teachers' perceptions of SEL training, there are limitations to the study. The sample size was drawn from one school district and may not represent all school districts across the nation. Any generalization should be limited only to this district. At the time of this study, the nation was experiencing a pandemic that may have impacted teachers' perceptions in general.

Definition of Key Terms

The following words and phrases are key terms for the study.

- **social-emotional learning (SEL)**: 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.

- **theory of action (TOA)**: uniform procedure proposed by CASEL to ease implementation from top down.

- **the state TOA**: a rubric that lays out a blueprint of systemic SEL at the state level and includes activities that require time and, in some cases, far-reaching human and financial resources.

- **early childhood education (elementary)**: Grades kindergarten through 5th.

Significance of the Study

Three factors highlighted the importance and significance of this study. First, elementary schools are public institutions mandated by law to provide adequate education for all students in the community. A holistic approach to education helps produce well-rounded and productive society members (Fraser, 2018). Second, implementing character developing lessons as part of the academic curriculum can significantly benefit students as they deal with the stressors of life, including the added pressure of an ongoing pandemic. Third, teachers are the engine through which education works, and their perceptions affect the effectiveness of SEL implementation in classroom (Bates & Jacobs, 2020). Zhai et al. (2015) shared a strong correlation between SEL activities, positive mindset, and academic outcomes. This study helped educational leaders

understand teachers' perspectives toward SEL, consequently developing more effective SEL training overall.

Summary

Based on the previous research, SEL's benefits are evident and extend to everyone who masters the SEL competencies. The TOA is a guideline that provides a uniform approach in implementing SEL in the school setting, especially at the primary level. Teachers are the main source through which students learn during instructional time, and teachers need to be able to apply SEL strategies in the classroom when necessary (Hunter et al., 2018). This study focused on gathering teachers' perceptions of the SEL training received during the preservice week of a new school year. With the concepts acquired in the SEL training sessions, individuals demonstrated higher confidence engaging in difficult conversations with students and higher trauma-informed care awareness in the classroom. The study sought to learn about teachers' perceptions of SEL training and how the SEL training impacted SEL implementation in the classroom. A non-experimental quantitative analysis was used with an electronic survey shared throughout the school district reflecting the SEL training during preservice week of the academic school year 2020-2021.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental study was to evaluate elementary teachers' perceived implementation and application in the classroom of the local school district's social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and to assess teacher confidence in applying those principles effectively.

Overview

The educational department faces a lack of resources to meet the challenges of providing equitable access to learning for each student in the public school system (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Bast et al., 2020; Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). The challenges faced by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) are growing daily. An article seems to surface weekly pointing out shortcomings within the public education system offered in some areas. This comparison stems from the inconsistency in delivery and resources in some communities. The FLDOE has a formidable task and a long list of community-specific problems to address each school year.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exponentially increased the difficulties and obstacles of providing the best opportunity for each student. The FLDOE's primary mission is to provide a quality education for all young individuals from pre-k through the end of high school. The department's goal is to ensure that each child within the state of Florida has access to

education, consequently improving the opportunities and promoting a better future by developing productive members of society (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Additionally, the use of resources designed to address the social-emotional needs of students in communities should be the focus of educational leaders using an evidence-based curriculum. This commitment can be demonstrated by choosing a curriculum that addresses the needs of students (Payton et al., 2000). Payton et al. (2000) suggested that the process was not as simple as most individuals thought, given the over-saturation of options on the market. Payton et al. (2000) found that more than a hundred programs that address social-emotional existed. However, Payton et al. (2000) only focused on 11 programs that catered to students' personal and social lives. The researchers evaluated these programs through the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) guidelines to ensure each program contained the required competencies. These findings of SEL programs' availability showed no shortage in resources for primary and secondary classrooms.

Since the race between the United States and Russia to improve their educational systems that resulted in the launch of Sputnik, the curriculum implemented in schools in the U. S. saw a shift from academics to the rising need for a more wholesome approach (Garrity & Longstreth, 2019). Educational leaders understood that the holistic approach would maximize student achievement and match other nations' push (Wissehr et al., 2011). The gap in academic performance in certain areas, as reported by the FLDOE datasheets, indicated an impossible task to reconcile if solely based on academics (*U.S. Department of Education*, 2020). Educational leaders sought to address the issues by focusing on the underlying causes. One thing was clear; the educational curriculum focused on more than just academics and addressed the need to increase instructional time and decrease classroom behaviors. The efforts to improve awareness

of the environmental factors influencing students' responses can be lengthy. Different stressors impact each student and may contribute to disruptions in the classroom (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Caldarella et al., 2017).

The introduction of social-emotional learning (SEL) to the general curriculum is a widely accepted notion. Internationally, growing interest in school-based SEL resulted in national initiatives for schoolwide programs in the past decade (Oberle et al., 2016). The study by Oberle et al. (2016) focused on overviews of the current state of SEL research and practice. The findings revealed that school districts, school leaders, and teachers who participated in the study were familiar with the concept of SEL (Oberle et al., 2016). However, change can involve strong resistance and a long road to acceptance. The lack of buy-in within the district in which this current study was conducted may create an unwillingness to explore SEL resources from teachers and the overall low familiarity with the materials (Poulou, 2017). Poulou (2017) shared that SEL concepts are meant for both teachers and students. First, teachers must accept SEL as a leading method of approach in the classroom. Poulou (2017) evaluated teachers' perception of their emotional intelligence (EI) and found that teachers' who scored high on EI valued and thought SEL whether required or not. They made it a point to teach through SEL and relied on their closeness to their students (Poulou, 2017). These choices may foster nervousness and hesitation among educational leaders and teachers. Consequently, teachers may not be as familiar as they need to be with SEL and available resources.

The consensus on the need for SEL is evident (Graczyk et al., 2000; Kasler & Elias, 2012; Pawlo et al., 2019; Sullivan, 2016); the implementation is the variant (Meyers et al., 2019). Meyers et al. added that a strong body indicated the benefits of an SEL program implemented efficiently. Elias and Weissberg (2000) studied initiatives that triggered a revolution in mental

health promotion. Their study found that school-based programs promoting SEL in children can be powerful in accomplishing preventive goals and decreasing problem behaviors. Social-emotional learning, when leveraged appropriately, increases student achievement at the primary level (Elias & Weissberg, 2000).

Social-Emotional Learning

Historical Foundation of Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning stemmed from a holistic approach, which Plato suggested to The Republic in ancient Greece. The process was further explained by Plato's ideology of maintaining an efficient curriculum in education to produce citizens of good character (Crandall et al., 2020). At the time, the name was different, but the concepts were similar. The overall thought was to prepare children from early childhood to become productive members of society. Plato was known for his revolutionary ideas and changes that impacted the society of ancient Greece. This concept has spread throughout the world and manifests through different beliefs and curriculum used in other nations' educational systems.

James Comer's study published through the 1988 *Scientific American* article explored educational approaches to classroom behaviors (Brandt, 1986; Reising, 1997). The study focused on the contrast between a child's experiences at home and school, and Karatekin (2018) categorized the descriptive methods as behavioral observation. The descriptive behavior observation methods emphasized how the experiences in the immediate environment (home) may have a more significant effect on a secondary environment (school), adding a million triggers that may exist in the secondary context (Karatekin, 2018).

Foundation of Social-Emotional Learning

The importance of SEL is increasingly evident because these concepts help students better cope with the daily stressors, particularly in the classroom environment (Caldarella et al., 2017). SEL is defined as "the process of providing all children and adolescents with an opportunity to learn, acquire, and practice the social-emotional competencies needed to succeed in life" (Oberle et al., 2016, p. 279). The three layers surrounding the five competencies of SEL are (a) classroom curriculum and instruction, (b) school climate, policies, and practices, (c) family and community partnerships (Oberle et al., 2016). Research showed a need for a different approach to solving the causes of classroom disruptions and striving to increase the instructional time (Boylan et al., 2018; Meyers et al., 2019). With the growing demands in school districts, the disturbances in instructional time are even more significant for Title I schools, schools with more than 75% of students receiving free or reduced lunch meals (*U.S. Department of Education*, 2020).

In 1994, the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) introduced five core competencies to clarify the objectives of SEL. These competencies inform the SEL process: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills (Oberle et al., 2016). The five competencies of SEL are surrounded by layers of proximity describing the layers' interaction with the competencies as influencers. These five competencies are an essential part of primary and secondary school education (Oberle et al., 2016). The skills can be adapted in different communities and adjusted depending on the specific needs of that community. Oberle et al. (2016) described the competencies as follows.

The first competency, self-awareness, is recognizing one's own emotions, thoughts, and impact on one's behavior (Oberle et al., 2016). This competency includes knowing one's challenges and strengths while being aware of personal goals and core values. The self-aware individual recognizes that the impact of thoughts, feelings, and actions are connected. For example, if individuals are frustrated, they must acknowledge their short fuse in the moment of frustration (Oberle et al., 2016). Recognizing and handling these moments helps the individual become highly self-aware (Oberle et al., 2016).

The second competency, self-management, promotes regulating one's emotions, thoughts, and actions (Oberle et al., 2016). The individual able to self-manage can deal with stressors healthily, control impulses in stressful situations, and is self-motivated to work towards personal or academic goals. For example, if a student faces some difficult times and can show poise while dealing with the stressors, this student has embraced the self-management competency and used the proper skills to ensure an appropriate display of behaviors (Oberle et al., 2016).

The third competency, social awareness, is the ability to accept the views and perspectives of others (Oberle et al., 2016). The authors added that the individual who practices social awareness could allow people from different backgrounds and cultures to empathize with others. For example, if a student can process and accept the differences of his classmates without bashing, demeaning, or teasing the classmate in question, this student used the tools acquired to remain socially aware (Oberle et al., 2016).

The fourth competency, relationship skills, is needed to form and maintain healthy relationships (Oberle et al., 2016). This competency provides communication, conflict resolution, active listening, and guidelines to seek help when needed. A clear example of a

student exhibiting this competency is a student conducting a mediation between two other classmates and encouraging them to listen to each other (Oberle et al., 2016).

The fifth competency, responsible decision-making, refers to tools that would enable students to make constructive and respectful choices with behavior and interactions (Oberle et al., 2016). This individual is capable of age-appropriate maturity to remain safe through thoughts and actions with self and others. For example, a student who acquired those skills can differentiate between safe and unsafe situations (Oberle et al., 2016).

A part of the SEL components is the enveloping layers surrounding the five competencies and their content. Implementing these surrounding factors is equally crucial to the process, as are the five skills. The three layers include the different approaches experienced by each individual, which researchers described as factors that impact individuals directly. Researchers concluded that these factors affect implementing an SEL curriculum and its effectiveness (Elias, 2009; Oberle et al., 2016).

Related Theories

A more recognizable study method was the behavioristic approach. Animal behavior, which paved the way for behavioristic sciences on human interactions, was studied previously through ecological and biological perspectives (Domjan et al., 2000). The method's popularity soared after the lack of credibility encountered by the psychological scientific method and the constant battle to prove the precise fit. The need for approval stemmed from the lack of trust in the psychological science process compared to the approved scientific process (Schultz & Schultz, 2016). The observational method became popular in the field, allowing for more data on human behavior (Domjan et al., 2000). Domjan et al. (2000) understood that all individuals were affected by their surroundings, primarily their household. Domjan et al. (2000) focused on

finding factors that motivated behaviors correlated to the actions of individuals within their environments. Despite academic knowledge gained, individuals affect and are affected by what is happening in their surroundings (Scrimin et al., 2018). The notion of environmental impact on individuals led to understanding the importance of including materials that address more than just the academic development portion of the child (Hart et al., 2020).

Another significant contribution that highly influenced social-emotional learning is Maslow's theory of self-actualization. In his theory, Maslow introduced three levels of self-actualization through a pyramidal-shaped view (Maslow, 1943). Crandall et al. (2020) conducted a study on depression and examined ecological predictors of baseline and change in adolescent depressive symptoms using Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. The researchers shared that Maslow's hierarchy of needs used an environmental approach rather than a biological approach, including overlapping stages (Crandall et al., 2020). The theory examines the person's needs by emphasizing the factors that influence the individual's life, such as family, family social-economic status, family stressors, and connection between the family dynamics. Additional factors included in the process are the community and perceived impacts on the individual (Crandall et al., 2020). Ultimately, the theory's core required the individual to reach levels within the framework to increase self-confidence overall.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs emphasizes the need for the individual to attain actualization in certain areas to become a balanced and productive member of society. Dominguez and Carton (1997) described that the first level of Maslow's pyramid contains the basic needs with two tiers. The bottom layer includes physiological conditions (i.e., food, water, warmth, rest), and the top level describes the safety needs (i.e., security and safety). The bottom tier encompasses belongingness and love (intimate relationships, friends), and the top layer

includes esteem needs (prestige and feeling of accomplishment). The top of the pyramid is self-actualization, reached when the individual fulfills the needs below (Dominguez & Carton, 1997). By acquiring all the pyramid elements, the individual becomes free of deterrents that negatively impact his environment. If the individual experiences a deficiency at any level, this individual must have the skill to cope with these stressors, thus connecting with social-emotional learning. The individual must have the ability to avoid succumbing to unhealthy ways to make up for the barriers in his life.

Implementations of Social-Emotional Learning

CASEL (2000) suggested that schools applied SEL in two ways: a preventive method and a competence-building tool to build character among students. A preventative approach would allow students to develop autonomy in certain areas of SEL, such as emotion regulation or impulse control. An individual develops skills to help process stressors encountered in a healthy manner (Graczyk et al., 2000; Kasler & Elias, 2012; Oberle et al., 2016). As a competence-building tool, SEL resources would help individuals (teachers, students, and staff) confidently approach situations requiring acquired skills such as effective communication or perspective-taking (Graczyk et al., 2000; Kasler & Elias, 2012; Oberle et al., 2016).

Educational leaders need to be aware of the factors involved in these tools. As mentioned in previous sections, the relationship between educators and students can be an advantage and an extrinsic motivation for students to devote time and effort to applying concepts received from instructors (Ngoh, 2018). Additionally, the relational approach suggests that the educator should embrace SEL's notions to display as a role model, increasing the impact on all students in the process (Shao & Müller, 2011). With consistency, training, and adequate preparation, educators can follow the guidelines of the SEL resources and incorporate them into their classroom culture.

Through this action, CASEL shared that SEL contents are impactful at every level (Oberle et al., 2016).

Socially and emotionally savvy students can demonstrate mastery of their emotions in general through a shared social-emotional language. Berman (2018) added that teachers and students are more likely to enthusiastically receive an SEL intervention because it fosters positive relationships, positive classroom culture, and high student responsiveness. A classroom climate conducive to student autonomy leads to healthy risk-taking and greater understanding between individuals (Akyol, 2016). Consequently, one may observe an increase in social skills, student-teacher relationships, academic skills, and a decrease in impulsiveness in the classroom (Zhai et al., 2015).

Sequence, Active, Focused, and Explicit (SAFE)

The best SEL resources include sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (SAFE) (Oberle et al., 2016). The only way to get the maximum benefits from SEL is proper implementation. The sequence part refers to an orderly approach, a planned set of activities purposed to spark interest in what SEL is. Four recommended practices are attached to this the acronym SAFE. The program must use a connected set of actions to reach specific objectives for skill development (sequence).

The active portion of SAFE is the need to make learning interactive and participative (Durlak et al., 2011). The SEL resource must use engaging forms of learning to help students acquire new skills (Active). The SEL program must have at least one component to develop personal or social skills (Focused). Teachers or instructors need to involve the student in the process of sharing keynotes in SEL's materials. Illustrations, examples, and connections are all part of the teaching process (Oberle et al., 2016). The next component, focus, involves narrowing

down the individual student's needs and focusing on developing that area. The program should target specific SEL skills (Explicit) (Durlak et al., 2011). The explicit part entails targeting social and emotional skills. This notion does not mean the extract of academics, but the goal is to bring the social and emotional aspects out and address the components directly (Oberle et al., 2016). SEL should complement the academic portion of the educational curriculum.

Berman (2018) added that for an SEL program to be well developed, the educational leaders need to plan, create professional developments, and allow staff to transition and learn. Berman (2018) mentioned that SEL is pivotal in improving school climate, students' academic performance and connection to the school, and teachers' morale. Teachers, the engine of the process, must embrace the process in concert with the educational leaders (Sullivan, 2016).

Teachers and Social-Emotional Learning

School districts should make every effort to increase SEL knowledge and include it in their strategic improvement plans. Inclusion is to value the importance of the task at hand, using the SEL program to help students better cope with their stressors and reduce classroom disruptions. Implementing an SEL program cannot be successful without a team approach and trust in the process. Schonert-Reichl (2017) analyzed the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) data on evaluating teacher preparedness and their level of familiarity with child development concepts. Schonert-Reichl (2017) analyzed NCATE's data on how much exposure teachers get to SEL contents during preservice training sessions and SEL implementation in the classroom. A total of 2,335 educators responded to an electronic survey sent out by the NCATE evaluating teacher SEL competence overall. Findings revealed that although 90% of instructors reported participating in at least one session on child development, the majority ranked classroom management as one of their top two professional development

needs (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Schonert-Reichl (2017) referred to teachers as the engine driving social and emotional learning practices in schools and classrooms. The same researcher added that teachers' proficiency in SEL influenced the classroom culture and referred to the profession as one of the most stressful occupations because of the contagiousness of stress (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). These staggering facts add more challenges to the effective implementation of SEL in the classroom setting. Can teachers incorporate concepts received from training and combine them with their teaching style to influence classroom culture? Schonert-Reichl (2017) also shared the impact of teachers' investment in the process by stating that most classroom teachers believe that SEL skills are teachable.

SEL's benefit extends to those individuals teaching and practicing the materials. One of the primary sources of the high turnaround experienced in many districts is the high incidence of teacher burnout (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Schonert-Reichl (2017) shared that teaching is one of the most stressful professions in the human service industry. Furthermore, a good SEL curriculum will include materials that help teachers better address the daily classroom disruptions by using the five competencies and focusing on the relational approach with students (Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Weissberg et al., 2015). The improvement of the relationship can increase the likelihood of student buy-in and level of interest in following, observing, and practicing the SEL components (Caldarella et al., 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

The implementation of SEL content requires fidelity to evaluate the effects on studentsand increase effectiveness overall. Boylan et al. (2018) explored early childhood teachers' perspectives of mindset and the role of a growth mindset in children in the early years of school. The instrument used by Boylan et al. (2018) gathered responses from 95 early childhood classroom teachers. The survey analyzed teachers' perspectives of growth mindset and

its effects on student achievement. Both teachers' mindsets and classroom climate influence the implementation of a social-emotional learning curriculum. One of the perceived barriers to SEL implementation can be the style of teaching in classrooms. Teachers may have a style that clashes with the concepts learned from different professional development sessions. Integrating a change in mindset and social-emotional learning lessons can help students increase academic achievement and willingness to learn (Boylan et al., 2018). The tasks given to students should include the five components of SEL and practical ways to apply them, including practice and repetition. Furthermore, testimonials on the effectiveness of SEL implementation should guide educators in going through the process. The relational impact of applying SEL content with fidelity can be a strong influence on decreasing classroom disruptions.

The Role of Leadership in SEL Implementation

Berman (2018) said that an actual implementation of an SEL program comes with the need to embrace the mindset of equal value of SEL and academics. If the SEL curriculum has no value in the eyes of the leaders and teachers, students will not understand the importance of nor the need for SEL (Berman, 2018), and this approach must start with the leaders. The integration of SEL must be one with the academic portion of the curriculum because of the interconnectedness between the two (Oberle et al., 2016). This process cannot be part of a simple checklist. Shao and Muller (2011) conducted a study investigating the influence of leadership on program results. Shao and Muller (2011) found that the approach of an established leader towards a situation determines the lenses through which the rest of the organization members (teachers and staff members) view and approach the tasks. In their index, the leader or the person taking charge had the more significant impact on implementing the program's concepts (Shao & Müller, 2011).

When the school leaders actively support the implementation of an SEL program, the program is more likely to succeed and attain the goals set for the school, thus becoming sustainable (Oberle et al., 2016). Using tools, such as the previously mentioned assessment scale, allows leaders and teachers to make the necessary adjustments and efficiently apply the SAFE approach (Gresham & Elliott, 2008). With many students not attaining successful academic outcomes, the SEL content is designed to help students close that gap and develop an intrinsic motivation to execute.

Oberle et al. (2016) argued that district leaders must form and communicate a vision of SEL, advocate for policies that support SEL integration, and allocate necessary resources to SEL programming in schools. One aspect discussed in their study is the high need for professional development and training for all staff. Additionally, the federal and state levels should be the base and foundation for establishing SEL programming. Clear goals and development benchmarks should be including SEL guiding school districts to include SEL programming in educational plans (Oberle et al., 2016).

The importance of a systemic approach to incorporate SEL into educational plans is essential. Oberle and al. (2016) mentioned six key activities to help move schools towards systemic SEL. The first activity is a shared vision for SEL established among all stakeholders within a school. The second activity includes the assessment of the needs and available resources for schoolwide SEL implementation. An ongoing and embedded professional learning in SEL instructions provided for all educators, staff, and parents encompasses the third activity. Another activity is to adopt evidence-based SEL programming and incorporate it into the schools' educational practices. The last activity is to integrate SEL into everyday practices at school. The

previous action is cycles of inquiry conducted to ensure continuous improvement (Oberle et al., 2016).

Teacher Perception and Efficacy

Previous research emphasized the lenses through which educators teach (Akyol, 2016; Bates & Jacobs, 2020; Chen & Tang, 2017). The word perception is defined as the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information to represent and understand the presented information of the environment (Bates & Jacobs, 2020). The argument is that perception impacts an individual's behavior and environment (Bates & Jacobs, 2020) and affects the way individuals approach certain things. For example, if some individuals in the education field have a favorable view of a teaching platform, they are more likely to use it in their classroom. One of the hypotheses in this current study is that perception plays a role in teachers' approach to SEL. Although there is a growing recognition of SEL and its importance (Buchanan et al., 2009), teachers' perceptions may vary from one school to another. In their study, Buchanan et al. (2009) evaluated teachers' knowledge regarding SEL, the use of SEL in schools, and teachers' perceptions regarding the feasibility of implementation and their current skills level. Out of the 263 schoolteachers that completed the survey instrument, Buchanan et al. (2009) found that nearly all respondents (98.9%) perceived SEL to be important in school and life, and 96.2% agreed that SEL skills improve academic outcomes. Teachers are the essential factor in enhancing students' SEL (Schiepe-Tiska et al., 2021), and their perceptions on the topic should be valued.

In their study, Bates and Jacob (2020) studied how perception worked in the human body and compared its similarities to data compression. Bates and Jacob (2020) mentioned that three principles governed the efficient data compression process and played a role in perception and

memory: limited capacity principle, task-dependency principle, and prior knowledge principle. Bates and Jacobs (2020) argued that through these principles and the rate-distortion theory (RDT) method, psychologists are provided with a rigorous framework for understanding crucial aspects of perception and perceptual memory.

Perception is connected to all senses and relies on an individual's processing the incoming sensory information, mixing it with his experiences, filtering it with acquired faculties and filters, and creating an output image based on the results of associations made (Bates & Jacobs, 2020; Poulou, 2017). In the educational field, leaders recognize the need for a diverse approach in creating a learning environment for students from all backgrounds. One of the main factors influencing an individual's perception of his environment and others is the mental models built over a long period, especially for adults (Cárdenas-Figueroa & Navarro, 2020).

1. Senge (1990) defined mental models as the principles that shape individuals' views and perceptions of the world around them. An individual's action reflects his perception and lenses through which he sees the world. Therefore, the mental models can be described as the lens through which individuals form their perceptions or opinions. Bates and Jacobs (2020) added that these formed perceptions or beliefs impact how an individual thinks, feels, and acts in his surroundings. The mental models compare to the last principle of prior knowledge. The challenges with mental models are deeply embedded (Senge, 1990). When addressing organizations, Senge (1990) said that having frozen mental models can be dangerous to an organization, and leaders must have different tools that help develop personal awareness and reflective skills.

Additionally, encouraging openness and merit breaks that fear of embracing learning situations and negative aspects of institutionalization.

Implementing this concept in a public-school setting takes a strong personal commitment and dedication to provide all students with the best available options. A sudden rise in behavioral challenges encouraged researchers and educators to explore nontraditional methods (Bohanon et al., 2018; Caldarella et al., 2017; Poulou, 2017). However, perceptions of these new programs and curricula may affect the level of buy-in from educators, who can impact the efficacy of implementation. Poulou (2017) conducted a regression analysis to investigate how teachers perceive emotional intelligence, SEL, and behavioral difficulties. Poulou (2017) found that teachers' perception of emotional intelligence and SEL skills were unrelated to students' emotional and behavioral challenges. These results also revealed that teacher-student conflictual relationships were primarily linked to these difficulties in behaviors (Poulou, 2017). The difficult behavioral times certainly strain the teacher-student relationship overall, causing a fluctuation in perception on both sides. The increasingly complicated obstacles encouraged a strong buy-in from different educators and the re-evaluation of current mental models.

Because of the role perception plays in one's thoughts and actions, understanding where classroom teachers stand about SEL may improve the educational leaders' ways of inspiring teachers and improve buy-in levels. Despite the strong approval and positive perception of SEL in the classroom and its importance in enhancing student outcomes, Buchanan et al. (2009) reported that less than half of teachers (45.5%) were currently implementing SEL programs. The importance of developing adequate training geared towards improving teachers' mentality and acceptance of SEL implementation should focus on school districts to help maximize instructional time in the classroom. With a focus on assisting teachers in developing a better

perception of implementing SEL, the focus should be to engage students in creative ways and creating a positive learning environment. The ultimate goal of SEL's application is to increase motivation in implementing SEL and other new procedures with fidelity.

Benefits of SEL Implementation

One of the concerns of SEL is finding adequate time to implement the concepts properly. The assumption is that the implementation would take time away from instructions in the classroom. However, Oberle et al. (2016) shared that both academics and SEL are intertwined, and the learning experience is a social process. Furthermore, Oberle et al. (2016), who focused on an overview of SEL's current state, showed that early academic performances predict later social-emotional abilities (p. 281). Poulou (2017) researched how teachers' perceptions of emotional intelligence, SEL skills, and teach-student relationships relate to students' emotional and behavioral abilities. After obtaining consent from teachers, parents, and students, Poulou (2017) evaluated elementary teachers from 43 schools with students ages 6 to 11. Participants completed a questionnaire about themselves and their students. Poulou (2017) found many correlations between teacher perceptions, teacher-student relationships, and student behavioral difficulties. One of the correlations revealed a moderate to a significant relationship in teachers' perceptions of conflict in teacher-student relationships. These results showed the impact that a relational approach has on teacher-student relationships, and one of the focuses of SEL implementation is the teacher-student relationship (Poulou, 2017). Although most of the research regarding SEL focuses on the benefits for students, Poulou's (2017) and Oberle et al.'s (2016) overall findings showed benefits for the entire faculty (including teachers and support staff). When properly integrated, SEL enables fewer interruptions in the class, and, therefore, less

frustration for teachers. The researchers found that these benefits lead to decreased teacher burnout and employee turnover (Oberle et al., 2016).

Mental Health Benefits

SEL through trauma-informed lenses can become a critical solution to the growing mental health needs at an all-time high today in schools (Miotto et al., 2020). Part of SEL's objectives is to provide the tools necessary to deal with daily stressors in healthy ways. The learning part of SEL is the continuous aspect involved for everyone. Therefore, for a young individual seeking to navigate life's daily challenges, these skills are necessary to cope with mental burdens and develop strong self-esteem.

Reaching self-actualization helps individuals gain the confidence necessary to create intrinsic motivation and the ability to differentiate between safe and unsafe situations, specific to the primary level of education (Kasler & Elias, 2012). When a student goes through the stages of needs and the needs are met, it diminishes the anguish and the desire to deviate from classroom instructions (Oberle et al., 2016). Students, teachers, and administrators also benefit from a more positive environment with less disruptive behaviors. This environment leads to increased lesson retention rates, thus contributing to student achievement (Ng, 2018; Zhang & Zeller, 2016) for which the public school system cannot fully carry the responsibility alone (Crandall et al., 2020). The higher the students' satisfaction rate, the fewer challenges educators face during instruction and school time (Gryglewicz et al., 2018).

Communal Approach

SEL can be done solely through the school's curriculum. As a described holistic approach, instilling these competencies into the students is not a job solely for educators (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Ideally, this educative process should start at home. However, the many

challenges in lower socio-economic status (SES) households make it challenging to focus on instilling principles tied to SEL (Karatekin, 2018).

Taylor et al. (2017) showed that although schools carry the responsibility of social-emotional education, families and communities must successfully implement an SEL program. In their study, the primary purpose of Taylor et al. (2017) was to analyze the follow-up effects of school-based universal SEL interventions. The study included 82 interventions involving 97,406 students, with only 51 of these interventions reporting on SES information. Findings revealed that the students continued to benefit from the interventions several weeks after participating in SEL interventions (Taylor et al., 2017). Additional data collected showed a correlation between families from lower SES homes and high-needs areas. With this different challenge presented, some communities' lack of support and knowledge suggested the need for more resources and more creative ways to reach out to the community for a combined effort in both environments.

The subject of SEL is an ongoing process, and the acceptance level has not yet reached a hundred percent. Some districts have reservations based on the lack of data available in some content areas and the lack of trust in research-based resources because of the origination of the studies. Taylor et al. (2017) specified that out of the numerous studies carried out throughout the CASEL campaign, a low incidence of programs that did not meet the SAFE criteria did not allow for non-SAFE SEL program testing outcomes. The unknown may present different findings than what was studied previously, and new methods may surface as a result.

A meta-regression conducted by Taylor et al. (2017) contained a single dependent variable to establish sufficient cell sizes for the analysis. The problem, in this case, is the inability to assess which variable was a significant predictor of positive or negative well-being. Future research must include all five SEL competencies to determine the critical positive

developmental outcomes. This aspect of studies presented a dilemma in understanding the long-term impact of the competencies on social and emotional learning in some settings. Additionally, researchers within local districts must value perception as an influencing factor in implementation effectiveness.

Taylor et al. (2017) mentioned that age was significantly related negatively to follow-up effects when examined as an individual predictor. The average intervention duration is significantly correlated to the participant's age. Although the focus of SEL seems to be focused on primary education, there was no evidence of more significant outcomes based on age or duration of the delivery. More research is needed in this area to determine the definite outcome based on age and length of conveyance.

Conceptual Framework

Oberle et al. (2016) mentioned a conceptual model for schoolwide SEL implementation. The model included embracing the core SEL competencies, creating short- and long-term goals to measure outcomes, coordinating SEL-related activities, building positive behavior support, differentiating between environments or classroom challenges, and receiving district, state, and federal support.

Figure 2 shows the visual route that SEL implementation follows before reaching students in the classrooms. The visual of the model can help understand the importance of how district training sessions and teachers' perceptions may impact how SEL competencies are implemented in the classrooms. Additionally, this conceptual model shows the trauma-informed lenses through which SEL is implemented in this local district.

The conceptual model should include a theory of action (TOA) for a schoolwide SEL implementation and a collaborative community plan for implementation (Weissberg et al., 2015).

A constant evaluation of the school's TOA keeps the progress of the SEL content on track and allows for adjustments where needed.

Figure 2

Conceptual Model for System-Wide SEL
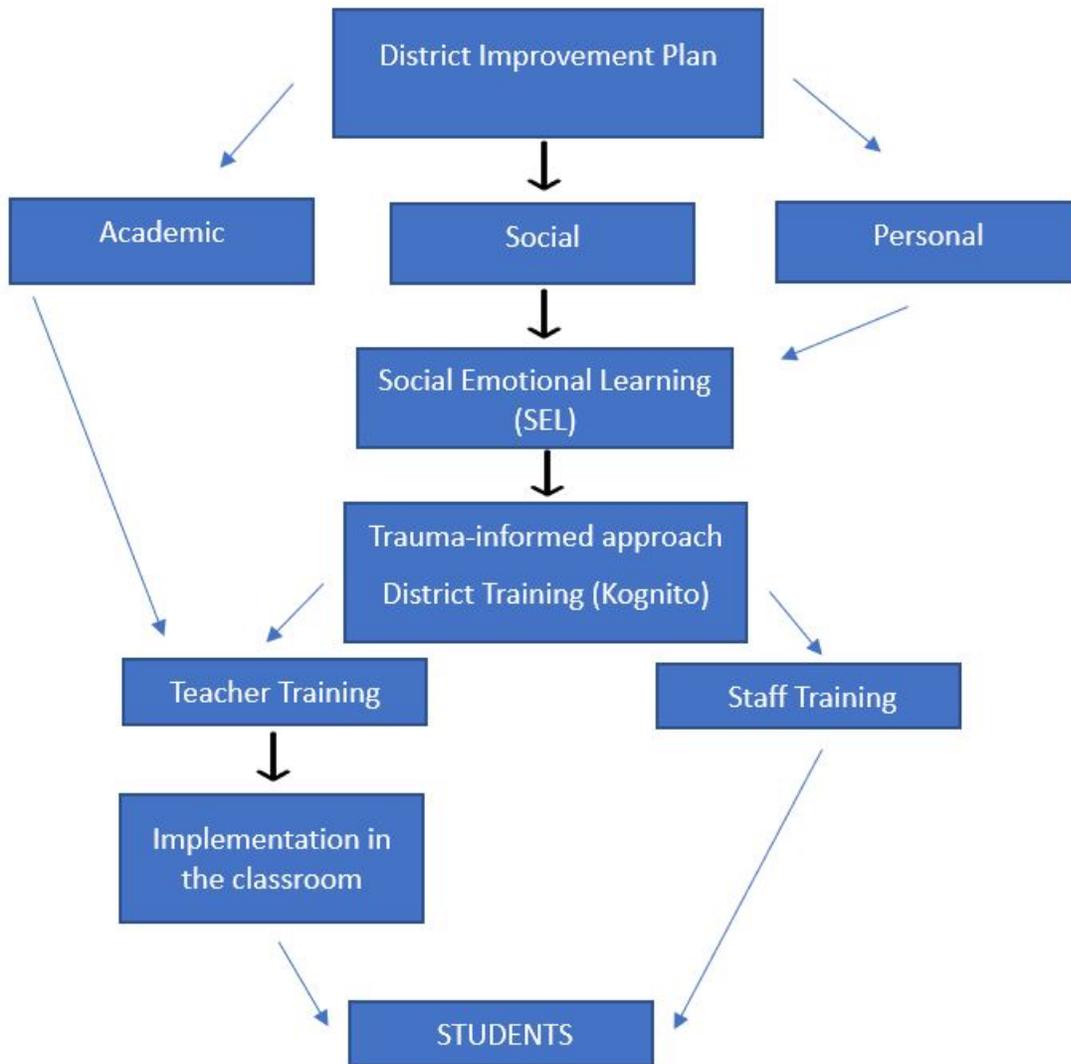
The SEL curriculum has the goal of helping students become individuals with a firm grasp on their social and emotional sides. When the curriculum is implemented to the fullest fidelity, the best results are expected (Oberle et al., 2016). Teachers, administrators, and other

educators must rely on the validity of the materials or curriculum chosen. The program must be implemented with fidelity and focused on the needs of the school and community to obtain the best results (Oberle et al., 2016). The latter is essential to the success of retention among students.

Kognito Training

As part of the preservice training of the academic year 2018-2019, the local school district adopted a new training program to increase classroom teacher awareness on some of the topics that often affect classroom cultures. Over the past decade, this organization (Kognito) has partnered with over 15,000 schools and districts to help teachers, staff, and students acquire more skills in mental health, suicide prevention, trauma-informed teaching, bullying, crisis response, and SEL. The online simulation involves teachers entering a virtual environment and conversing with three different student avatars ("High School Teachers Latest Trainees in N.Y. Suicide Prevention Initiative," 2011; Rein et al., 2018). The module can generally be complete in an hour. The focus of the course is to help individuals in the school system work with students in need and contribute to the efforts of early prevention (Dodge et al., 2015). Dodge et al. (2015) found strong evidence of the benefits of early prevention, starting at the primary level, and argued that increasing SEL competence in youth could help decrease the likelihood of at-risk behaviors. As mentioned before, one of the goals of SEL is to reduce classroom disruptions. This platform's focus is to help educators engage in meaningful conversation with students through trauma-informed teaching and SEL (Greif Green et al., 2020). The idea is to pay attention to the antecedents and recognize the warning signs (mental health or adverse childhood experiences) before they become an interruption in the classroom or an obstacle to student academic opportunities (Karatekin, 2018).

Blodgett and Lanigan (2018) examined adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in nonclinical settings such as public elementary schools. This study extended across ten different elementary schools and included a sample of 2,101 students in an early education setting. One goal of this training program is to help teachers familiarize themselves with conversational approaches that would help students with some of the daily stressors in their lives. As Karatekin (2018) suggested, raising teachers awareness on the topic of mental health increases the likelihood of adequate interventions. Another goal of the program is to encourage and increase the relational approach between teachers and students (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018). The idea of this virtual platform is to help train teachers to tend to student mental health needs by recognizing the precursors, setting up a safe environment, and accessing the proper resources through mental professionals on campus.

The study on which this training originated underlines the responsibility of teachers to identify, support, and refer students with mental health needs to mental health professionals in the schools (Greif Green et al., 2020). However, the awareness level required for such a task does not come without practice and dedication. The approach used through this virtual platform includes a behavior change model that integrates several evidence-based models, techniques, and learning principles. The training involves logging into a virtual environment and engaging in role-play conversations with emotionally responsive virtual humans. The main objectives are to help teachers improve their preparedness and confidence in identifying and responding to students mental health needs (Greif Green et al., 2020).

Rein et al. (2018) evaluated the efficacy of the program in Kognito and its impact on participants. A large group pre-and post-evaluation sample (N= 2,727, including 1,124 students) was conducted to complete the basic Kognito module training. Although this specific study

focused on the collegiate level, findings revealed a medium increase in referral by participants after the two-month follow-up (Rein et al., 2018). The results of this study showed that self-efficacy scores improved from pre-to post- testing across the board. Additionally, participants reported higher scores in preparedness in the post-evaluation.

Similarly, Coleman et al. (2019) evaluated the virtual platform by using a randomized controlled trial to test the efficacy of Kognito. Findings also revealed that the experience in the simulation of helping at-risk students contributed to an increase in acceptability in seeking help (Coleman et al., 2019). Coleman et al. (2019) added that this level of acceptability decreases fears or judgmental attitudes.

The program uses trauma-informed care to train educators and raise their level of awareness in the process. From students with ACEs to students who deal with daily stressors, the platform's approaches and practices allow the trainees to experience real conversation while developing their needs assessment skills in many areas, including the five competencies of SEL. Lastly, this program aims to counter the stigma placed on mental health. Greif Green et al. (2020) shared in their results that an online service applied in preservice preparation settings may positively affect teacher attitudes about their preparedness and confidence to support their students in need (Coleman et al., 2019; Rein et al., 2018). Previous research reported similar findings showing a significant positive relationship between classroom teacher attitudes and their perceived preparedness level (Akyol, 2016; Sullivan, 2016). These initiatives will allow for better training and preparation for educators and realistic goal setting throughout the SAFE implementation process.

Obstructing Factors to Social-Emotional Learning

Educational leaders face challenges such as the high rate of turnover across many school districts. Another specific challenge faced by individuals attempting to change the educational system is sustainability (Kasler & Elias, 2012). The issue of sustainability is the most common and increasingly complex obstacle to overcome across education. Although the lack of resources is the most apparent, confidence in new solutions does not come readily (Ngoh, 2018). Lastly, research conducted in the classrooms addressed disruptive behaviors originating from students who have lived adverse childhood experiences (Karatekin, 2018). Karatekin (2018), in a short-term longitudinal study, found that the effects of ACEs can be significant, especially on students. These experiences substantially impact the classroom environment, instructional time, communities, and student achievement (Karatekin, 2018). The effect of skills learned through SEL will further be discussed with the perceived solutions. The SEL theory is part of character development goals established by the FLDOE through the change of focus in curricular decisions for primary and secondary public schools.

Elias (2009) claimed that there is a missing piece to the United States' education agenda. Elias found that, unlike other resources that targeted specific problems in a child, SEL impacted all aspects of education, including student achievement (Elias, 2009). The apparent need for more resources is evident (Kress & Elias, 2006), and more instructional time disruptions make a strong case for education to move away from solely teaching academics. The new direction suggested is to embrace a holistic approach to fulfilling the educational need of all children. Elias (2009) mentioned the need for necessary skills, given the classroom challenges faced. For a curriculum to be successful, it must first be embraced, which can vary from one district to another (Oberle et al., 2016). Oberle et al. (2016) evaluated the SEL state in the U.S. and

developed a conceptual framework for SEL school-wide implementation. The growing research

findings on evidence-based interventions for child development and reducing behavioral

occurrences in the classroom support the need for patience from educational leaders in applying

these interventions with their multi-tiers of support system (Caldarella et al., 2017a; Oberle et al.,

2016; Taylor et al., 2017). Social-emotional learning is a solution introduced by the FLDOE and

a new term coined for curriculum directly addressing character development, social interaction,

and emotional intelligence.

Although the need for this new solution is apparent, the application of SEL does not

come without challenges. According to Lee et al. (2019), the application of SEL has many

factors that cause a variance in its effectiveness. One of the factors discussed in Lee et al.'s study

is teachers' perceptions of SEL. Although the authors stated a positive relationship between SEL,

student achievement (primary), and adult productivity, this study found that teacher perceptions

play a critical role in implementing SEL in the classroom (Lee et al., 2019). The researchers

mentioned perception as one of the determining factors of proper implementation and the

enthusiasm involved in the process (Lee et al., 2019). At the primary level, Lee et al. (2019)

shared that the SEL curriculum chosen should focus on the specific needs of the student

population. However, if the focus is not on student needs, the likelihood of success may be

lower.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic caused havoc in the lives of many individuals globally

and created a severe level of physical and mental damage (Stark et al., 2020). Although younger

individuals were at a lower risk of poor physical outcomes from COVID-19, the mental health

impact caused by the pandemic is an imminent challenge that schools must face daily (Stark et

al., 2020). Previous research suggested that mental disorders begin in childhood (Cree et al.,

2018). Adding the experience of mass disaster (pandemic) and economic recession makes a strong case for an increased risk of mental health disorders. The pandemic either added new stressors or worsened existing ones (Stark et al., 2020).

Consequently, these changes are reflected in the needs encountered in schools, primarily Title I schools. Another aspect mentioned by Stark et al. (2020) is increasing children's tolerance, which can be highly beneficial in nurturing the social and emotional side. Children's high resiliency in such situations allows for a stronger push to help develop coping skills against mental health stressors despite the environmental stressors. Nonetheless, the enormous stress created by the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be ignored and must be taken into account during all aspects of this study as an influencing factor.

Summary

Based on the literature review, the need to add SEL content in the primary academic curriculum is evident (Akyol, 2016; Crandall et al., 2020; Hunter et al., 2018; Mahoney et al., 2020; Oberle et al., 2016). With the different challenges FLDOE faces every day, some educational leaders have added new perceived solutions and a more wholesome approach to the academic curriculum by adding social-emotional learning to the primary curriculum. In schools with lower SES households, implementing this curriculum was met with more definite obstacles due to the increased needs resulting from either ACEs or other hardships (Karatekin, 2018). The challenges to implementing a curriculum requiring more commitment and training for teachers may be worth the sacrifice due to the positive effects that research showed on reducing instruction interruption and students' social-emotional development due to SEL resources used.

The most frequent word associated with the implementation of an SEL curriculum throughout this review was fidelity. Previous studies highlighted the importance of educational

leaders and classroom teachers understanding the benefits of a total commitment (Hunter et al., 2018; Kasler & Elias, 2012; Sullivan, 2016). Implementing SEL within the curriculum cannot be done without the necessary buy-in and backing of the leadership team and the classroom teachers in the front line of application. According to sources reviewed, the implementation of SEL must allow room for trial and error based on the classroom environment and culture (Akyol, 2016; Oberle et al., 2016; Weissberg et al., 2015). Other factors that influence performance, such as situational, environmental, location, and organization culture, are borderline unpredictable, which increases the difficulties in achieving self-actualization for each student. Educational leaders and classroom teachers must also find ways to engage the communities and share the SEL content to continue learning as much as possible (Crandall et al., 2020; Maslow, 1943; Pawlo et al., 2019). SEL contents, meant to help address some of the students' character development and other non-academic needs, are generic and can be applied in many ways. The implementation of SEL can be creative. However, these must fit the needs of the classroom culture, the environment, and the community. CASEL (2000) mentioned that the objectives are to promote practices that ensure the effective implementation of SEL through scientific findings and instill preventive efforts through various competence-building tools.

SEL implementation takes a joint effort from educational leaders, classroom teachers, and students to be effective. This review explored factors that challenge SEL implementation in the school setting while exploring a platform chosen by a local school district. Additionally, this literature review showed the many benefits of SEL with students and anyone who uses an evidence-based SEL curriculum built following CASEL's guidelines. The review also provided information about the influence of teachers' perceptions and the impact that has in the classroom.

III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental study was to evaluate elementary teachers' perceived implementation and application in the classroom of the local school district's social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and to assess teacher confidence in applying those principles effectively.

Statement of Problem

The benefits of providing holistic education to all students in the district reside in acquiring life skills students can use beyond their primary educational journey. The district representing the research site in the study adopted many resources designated to provide supplemental instructions focused on each student's social and emotional development. However, SEL resources are now accepted and included in curricula across the state where the research site is located. SEL goals are outlined explicitly in objectives and academic purposes, contributing to the overall acceptance of SEL in general education.

The implementation of SEL competencies is a unique challenge and often overlooked in the process. Although these goals are outlined in statutes and educational objectives at the state and local levels associated with the study's research site, the implementation of SEL instruction contents may vary based on knowledge, perceptions, and other deciding factors (Akyol, 2016; Bates & Jacobs, 2020; Mrazek et al., 2018). Through training sessions like Kognito, the primary goal of this local school district was to provide knowledge and adequate mentorship in

51

implementing SEL concepts in the classroom setting for teachers. The study was designed to evaluate teachers' perceptions of the training, and their perceived efficacy of implementing the concepts in the classroom by level of application.

An essential part of increasing SEL program commitment from classroom teachers is understanding their perceptions regarding the SEL skills as a component of their daily instructions in the classroom. This study focused on securing an understanding of teacher perceived self-efficacy in implementing SEL principles in the classroom. The results achieved in the study may provide helpful feedback for educational leaders on the matter of SEL implementation and simultaneously assist in creating more meaningful professional development sessions in the future in the area of SEL.

Description of Methodology

The primary focus of the study was to evaluate the role of teachers' perception of efficacy in implementing SEL training concepts and practice in the classroom. A quantitative, non-experimental research design was used to assess teachers' confidence in SEL implementation and application preparedness. The quantitative data gathered provided a detailed description of teachers' perceptions of the study's topic. The study research site was a public school district located in one state in the southeastern United States. Study data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistical techniques using the 28th version of IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Research Context

This study included surveying individuals working in the classrooms in a school district local to the researcher. Responses recorded from individuals in direct contact with students in the primary learning setting provided relevant data.

Participants

Study participants included elementary teachers in the local school district representing the research site selected for the study. Study participants were delimited to classroom teachers in schools who have direct contact with students.

Research Instrument

The study's research instrument was a researcher-created survey comprised of 18 items and was uploaded to Google Forms to facilitate distribution to teachers selected for participation in the study. The survey was represented through three sections. The first section included the informed consent form for all participants to read before answering any question. The second section included demographic questions, and the third section included 14 items measuring different elements of teachers' perception of SEL implementation in the classroom. The survey instrument, a 5- point, Liker scale-type survey, was comprised of 14 closed-response items. Study participants were offered the option of *uncertain* (3) within the survey's scale.

Validity

The validity of data produced using the study's research instrument was first addressed through a subjective, content validity judgment process (Boeteng et al., 2018). Personal judgment is generally understood as a process whereby informed persons, called experts, give an opinion or estimate based on intuition and guessing (Miranda, 2001) without objective data. Using experts (SMEs), the judgment process provided the themes that formed the survey items reflecting in the study's research instrument.

In the second phase of the research instrument validation process, Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to evaluate the instrument's internal reliability of pilot study participant response. The pilot study represented in the second phase of the instrument validation process was conducted

by administering the research instrument to 25 study participants. An alpha level of at least $\alpha = .60$ was required in the second phase of the research instrument validation process. If the $\alpha = .60$ level in the second phase of research instrumentation, item analysis would be conducted to determine which item(s) may require refining or complete removal from the proposed study's research instrument. The alpha level achieved in the pilot study phase of the study exceeded the threshold for acceptability (George & Mallery, 2018).

In the third phase of instrument validation, the posterior phase of research instrument validation, Cronbach's alpha (α) was again used to assess participant responses' internal reliability to survey items once study data were collected and recorded. Cronbach alpha levels of $\alpha \geq .80$ were considered very good, and levels of $\alpha \geq .90$ were considered excellent (George & Mallery, 2018).

Reliability

The internal reliability of the 18 survey items was achieved by using the Cronbach's alpha statistical technique. The internal reliability level achieved for study participants indicating that they apply the training principles on a regular basis was $\alpha = 90$. The internal reliability level achieved for study participants indicating that they do not apply the training principles on a regular basis was $\alpha = 85$.

Procedures

The research instrument was distributed electronically to every participating elementary school in the local district representing the study's research site. The research instrument was distributed to individuals (classroom teachers) who completed the district sponsored Kognito training. The sample of participants ($n = 201$) more specifically included classroom teachers who participated in the Kognito training sessions during the preservice week of district sponsored

professional development. The research instrument was sent to all 25 elementary schools in the

district representing the study's research site for eventual distribution to classroom teachers.

Teachers received the initial invitation to complete the survey items on the research instrument in

the last week of April 2021. The survey remained accessible until the end of May 2021.

Data Analysis

Preliminary, foundational analyses were conducted before the analytic response to the

study's two primary research questions. Using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques,

evaluations of missing data, internal reliability, and demographic identifying information were

conducted.

The one-sample t test was conducted for research questions one and two. The threshold

value for statistical significance of finding was established at $p \leq .05$. The Cohen's d statistical

technique was used to assess the magnitude of study participant response effect to research

questions one and two. Sawilowsky (2009) effect size conventions were adopted for use for

interpretative purposes in research questions one and two.

Power analysis for a one-sample t test was conducted using the G-POWER platform

(3.1.9.2, Universität Düsseldorf, Germany) to determine sufficient sample size to detect a

statistically significant finding using an alpha of $p = 0.05$ and a power $(1 - \beta)$ index of 0.80.

Based on the assumptions mentioned above, the desired sample size is 12 for an anticipated large

effect $(d = .80)$. For an anticipated medium effect $(d = .50)$, the desired sample size is 27 (Faul et

al., 2008).

Preliminary Analysis

Two research questions were stated to address the study's topic and research problem.

The following represents the research questions formally stated in the study.

Research Question 1

To what degree do study participants perceive they are implementing SEL training concepts within their classroom?

H_a: The degree of implementation will be manifested at a statistically significant degree beyond *sometimes* on the response scale.

Research Question 2

Considering the elements of SEL identified in the training module, in which elements were the greatest degree of difference between the teachers who applied the SEL elements on a regular basis and those teachers who did not?

H_a: The survey item, "I promote Social-Emotional Learning in the classroom setting," will reflect the greatest degree of response effect favoring study participants who regularly apply SEL training principles in the classroom setting.

Summary

A non-experimental quantitative approach addressed this study's topic and problem statement. The internal reliability of the survey instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical technique. As a result, the internal reliability level achieved in the study was considered excellent using the conventions of interpretation of alpha offered by George and Mallery (2018). The data analysis addressed two specific research questions focused upon teachers' perception of SEL training and confidence in applying these concepts. An electronic survey was used to gather data for this study. A non-probability conveniently accessed sample of 201 elementary classroom teachers emanated from one school district representing the study's research site. The findings obtained in the survey instrument are formally reported in Chapter IV of the study.

IV. RESULTS

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental study was to evaluate elementary teachers' perceived implementation and application in the classroom of the local school district's social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and to assess teacher confidence in applying those principles effectively.

Methods of Data Collection

Two research questions and hypotheses were stated to address the study's topic and research problem. The study's sample of participants was 201 classroom teachers employed in schools in one state located in the southeastern region of the United States. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used in the preliminary analysis of data and the study's research questions. Chapter IV contains the formal reporting of findings achieved in the study.

Analyses were conducted for illustrative and comparative purposes before the formal analysis of the study's research questions. The analyses, preliminary and foundational in nature, focused upon evaluations of the study's demography, initial descriptive statistical findings within survey item response, missing data/survey completion rate, and internal reliability. The following represents the findings for preliminary, foundational analyses conducted in the study.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate the study's demography. Table 1 contains a summary of the findings for the descriptive statistical analyses of the study's demographic identifier variables.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Demography

Variable	*n*	*%*	Cumulative *%*
Application Status			
Does not apply regularly	57	28.36	28.36
Does apply regularly	144	71.64	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Gender			
Female	168	83.58	83.58
Male	33	16.42	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Degree			
Undergraduate	113	56.22	56.22
Graduate	88	43.78	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Experience			
5 Years and Less	42	20.90	20.90
6 to 10 Years	49	24.38	45.27
11 to 20 Years	66	32.84	78.11
Over 20 Years	44	21.89	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00

Descriptive Statistics: Survey Items by Group

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to assess study participant responses to survey items on the research instrument. Frequencies, measures of central tendency (mean scores), variability (standard deviations), and data normality (skew, kurtosis) were represented in the analyses.

Table 2 contains a summary of findings for survey item responses for study participants indicating that they do not apply training principles in their classrooms on a regular basis.

Table 2

Descriptive Summary Statistics: Survey Item responses for Study Participants Indicating that They Do Not Apply Training Principles on a Regular Basis

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*SE$_M$*	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Item1	3.89	0.77	57	0.10	2.00	5.00	-0.29	-0.30
Item2	3.89	0.86	57	0.11	1.00	5.00	-0.82	1.10
Item3	4.11	0.86	57	0.11	2.00	5.00	-0.88	0.34
Item4	3.61	0.94	57	0.12	2.00	5.00	-0.07	-0.88
Item5	4.02	0.72	57	0.10	2.00	5.00	-0.61	0.65
Item6	4.19	0.69	57	0.09	2.00	5.00	-0.92	1.74
Item7	3.88	1.01	56	0.13	1.00	5.00	-1.24	1.14
Item8	3.89	0.79	57	0.11	2.00	5.00	-0.46	-0.07
Item9	3.96	0.82	57	0.11	2.00	5.00	-0.52	-0.17
Item10	3.96	0.71	57	0.09	1.00	5.00	-1.49	4.87
Item11	3.88	0.71	57	0.09	2.00	5.00	-0.43	0.33
Item12	4.04	0.73	57	0.10	2.00	5.00	-0.61	0.54
Item13	3.91	0.75	55	0.10	2.00	5.00	-0.64	0.55
Item14	4.16	0.73	56	0.10	2.00	5.00	-0.53	-0.07

Table 3 contains a summary of findings for survey item responses for study participants indicating that they apply training principles in their classrooms on a regular basis.

Table 3

Descriptive Summary Statistics: Survey Item responses for Study Participants Indicating that They Apply Training Principles on a Regular Basis

Sur	M	SD	N	SE_M	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Item1	4.06	0.64	144	0.05	1.00	5.00	-1.50	6.60
Item2	4.03	0.70	144	0.06	1.00	5.00	-1.14	3.04
Item3	4.13	0.67	143	0.06	1.00	5.00	-0.85	2.71
Item4	3.82	0.74	144	0.06	2.00	5.00	-0.23	-0.18
Item5	4.35	0.60	144	0.05	2.00	5.00	-0.51	0.46
Item6	4.48	0.52	144	0.04	3.00	5.00	-0.07	-1.62
Item7	4.38	0.59	144	0.05	2.00	5.00	-0.55	0.52
Item8	4.19	0.62	143	0.05	2.00	5.00	-0.32	0.31
Item9	4.14	0.63	144	0.05	2.00	5.00	-0.62	1.47
Item10	4.29	0.60	143	0.05	3.00	5.00	-0.23	0.61
Item11	4.17	0.70	142	0.06	2.00	5.00	-0.49	0.03
Item12	4.25	0.61	143	0.05	2.00	5.00	-0.38	0.35
Item13	4.16	0.69	143	0.06	2.00	5.00	-0.61	0.62
Item14	4.31	0.72	144	0.06	1.00	5.00	-1.54	4.82

Missing Data/Survey Completion Rate

The study's extent of missing data and subsequent survey completion rate were assessed using descriptive statistical techniques. The level of missing data with the response arrays was minimal at 0.39% ($n = 11$) and found to be sufficiently random in nature, MCAR x^2 (104) = 100.10; $p = .59$. The survey completion rate achieved in the study was considered exceptional at 99.61% and was considerably higher than 89% generally achieved with surveys employing

multiple-choice Likert-type items and surveys comprised of 10 to 20 items (*Survey Monkey,* 2021).

Internal Reliability

The internal reliability of study participant response to survey items on the research instrument was evaluated using the Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical technique. As a result, the internal reliability level achieved in the study was considered excellent using the conventions of interpretation of alpha offered by George and Mallery (2018). Table 4 contains a summary of findings for the evaluation of overall internal reliability of study participant response to survey items on the study's research instrument.

Table 4

Overall Internal Reliability: All Survey Items

Scale	No. of Items	α	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
All Items	14	0.89	0.87	0.91

Note. The lower and upper bounds of Cronbach's α were calculated using a 95% confidence interval.

Table 5 contains a summary of the internal reliability achieved across all survey items for study participants indicating that they do not apply the training principles in their classrooms on a regular basis.

Table 5

Internal Reliability: Study Participants Not Applying Training Principles on a Regular Basis

Scale	No. of Items	α	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Not Applying Regularly	14	0.85	0.80	0.90

Note. The lower and upper bounds of Cronbach's α were calculated using a 95% confidence interval.

Table 6 contains the internal reliability achieved across all survey items for study participants indicating that they apply the training principles in their classrooms on a regular basis.

Table 6

Internal Reliability: Study Participants Applying Training Principles on a Regular Basis

Scale	No. of Items	α	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Applying Regularly	14	0.90	0.88	0.92

Note. The lower and upper bounds of Cronbach's α were calculated using a 95% confidence interval

Data Analysis by Research Question

The study's research questions were addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The threshold for statistical significance of finding was established at $p \leq .05$. The numeric magnitude of effect values within findings was interpreted qualitatively using the conventions of effect size interpretations proposed by researchers on the field (Sawilowsky, 2009). The findings achieved within the formally stated research questions are presented as follows for each research question and associated hypothesis.

Research Question #1

Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the classroom between the teachers who apply concepts learned in SEL training on a regular basis and teachers who do not?

Hypothesis

H_a: There will be a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the classroom between the teachers who apply concepts learned in SEL training on a regular basis and teachers who do not.

Analysis

The statistical significance of the mean score difference in the comparison featured in research question one was addressed using the *t*-test of Independent Means. The assumptions of data normality and homogeneity of variances were first addressed before proceeding to the analysis of research question one.

The assumption of data normality was assessed using the respective skew and kurtosis values of data arrays central to the research question. The skew values of 0.07 and 0.33 and kurtosis values of -0.38 and 0.35 for overall perceptions of classroom efficacy for study participants who apply and do not apply training principles on a regular basis were -/+2.0 skew and -/+7.0 kurtosis, both well within the parameters of normality (George & Mallory, 2018). As a result, the assumption of data normality was satisfied for both groups identified for study purposes.

The Levene's *F* test was conducted to assess whether the variance of overall perceptions of classroom efficacy was equal between the categories of study participant application of training principles status. The result of Levene's test was non-statistically significant, based $F(1, 188) = 0.01$, $p = .94$, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was satisfied.

Findings

The result of the two-tailed *t*-test of Independent Means was statistically significant, $t_{(188)} = -3.34$, $p = .001$. The finding indicates the mean of overall perceptions of classroom efficacy was significantly different between the study participants who do not apply training principles regularly and study participants who do regularly apply training principles, favoring the perceptions of those who apply training principles regularly. The magnitude of effect in the difference for the comparison featured in research question one was considered medium ($d = .53$).

A summary of results for the analysis in research question one is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Overall Perceptions of Classroom Efficacy by Application of Training Principles Status

	Does not apply regularly		Does apply regularly				
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*T*	*P*	*d*
Overall Efficacy	3.96	0.46	4.20	0.43	-3.34	.001	0.53

Note. N = 190. Degrees of Freedom for the *t*-statistic = 188. *d* represents Cohen's *d*.

In light of the statistically significant finding favoring study participants identified as applying training principles on a regular basis, the alternative hypothesis in research question one was retained.

Research Question #2

Considering the elements of SEL identified in the training module, in which elements was the greatest degree of difference between the teachers who applied the SEL elements on a regular basis and those teachers who did not?

Hypothesis

*H*ₐ: The element of "I promote Social-Emotional Learning in the classroom setting" will reflect the greatest degree of effectiveness among all elements of SEL training.

Analysis

The comparison of study participant response to survey items on the research instrument by application status was conducted using mean score differences, statistical significance of mean score difference, and magnitude of effect of difference in the comparisons. As a result, all 14 comparisons favored study participants identified as applying training principles on a regular basis. Slightly over half of the 14 comparisons were manifested at a statistically significant level. The survey item in which the greatest degree of magnitude of effect in the difference in the

comparisons was manifested in Item 7 (I promote Social-Emotional Learning in the classroom setting) at d = .69.

Findings

Table 8 contains a complete summary of finding for the comparison featured in research question two.

Table 8

Comparison Summary by Survey Item

Survey Item	Favoring	Mean Difference	T	d
Item 1	Applies	0.17	1.58	.25
Item 2	Applies	0.14	1.19	.19
Item 3	Applies	0.02	0.18	.03
Item 4	Applies	0.21	1.64	.26
Item 5	Applies	0.37	3.39***	.53
Item 6	Applies	0.29	3.20**	.50
Item 7	Applies	0.51	4.40***	.69
Item 8	Applies	0.29	2.80**	.44
Item 9	Applies	0.17	1.61	.25
Item 10	Applies	0.33	3.31***	.52
Item 11	Applies	0.29	2.64**	.41
Item 12	Applies	0.22	2.14*	.34
Item 13	Applies	0.25	2.25*	.36
Item 14	Applies	0.15	1.27	.20

*p < .05   **p < .01   ***p ≤ .001

In light of the finding for the survey item, "I promote Social-Emotional Learning in the classroom setting," the alternative hypothesis in research question two was retained.

Summary

Exceptional levels of survey participant completion rates and internal reliability were achieved in the study. The study's sample was robust, far exceeding a priori statistical power

analysis parameters necessary for sufficient statistical power. Study participants identified as applying training principles in their classrooms on a regular basis perceived their efficacy in matters of SEL at a statistically significant level greater than their counterparts who did not apply training principles in their classrooms on a regular basis. Moreover, study participants identified as applying training principles in their classrooms on a regular basis perceived their efficacy in matters of SEL at levels greater than their counterparts who did not apply training principles in their classrooms on a regular basis across all 14 items on the study's research instrument. Chapter V contains a discussion of the findings achieved and reported in Chapter IV.

V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental study was to evaluate elementary teachers' perceived implementation and application in the classroom of the local school district's social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and to assess teacher confidence in applying those principles effectively.

The study's research design was non-experimental and quantitative, featuring a survey research methodology. Two research questions were formally stated in an effort to address the study's topic and research problem. Participants ($n = 201$) completed the study's research instrument, an electronic survey, within four weeks of the initial administration. Statistically significant differences emerged between the teachers who applied the training concepts in their classroom and those who did not apply the training concepts in their classroom. Moreover, all items represented on the study's research instrument favored study participants identified as applying training concepts regularly.

Discussion of Preliminary Findings

The preliminary and foundational data were achieved using primarily descriptive statistical techniques. For each of the demographic questions stated, no missing data were evident. Moreover, the participant completion rate for the study's response arrays was exceptional (99.61%). The exceptional intactness of the study's response data associated with the

research instrument would appear to reinforce the credibility of the research and the subsequent analyses based upon the data set itself.

Noteworthy levels of internal reliability were achieved for study participants who regularly apply SEL concepts ($\alpha = 90$) and those who do not apply the training concepts regularly ($\alpha = 85$). These noteworthy internal reliability levels achieved in the study are essential for two reasons: first, the very good to excellent internal reliability levels validate the instrument's ability to produce data consistent with the study's construct; second, the noteworthy levels of internal consistency achieved in the study would appear to reinforce the credibility and trustworthiness of findings subsequently manifested in the analyses of the two research questions.

The descriptive statistical summary information provided vital data regarding the study's sample of participants. In the demographic section of findings, participants answered four questions related to their gender, years of service, educational degree, and whether training concepts are applied in the classroom with fidelity. Approximately 55% of participants possessed an undergraduate degree compared to 45% of participants who possessed a graduate degree (professional degree, certificate, license, or others). Another question that reflected balance within participants concerned years of service. Participants in the current study manifested an approximate equal representation across categories identified for study purposes, with 42 (20.9%) subjects serving five years or less, 49 (24.4%) subjects working for 6-10 years, 66 (32.8%) subjects serving for 11-20 years, and 44 (21.9%) subjects serving for more than 20 years.

Considering the gender of study participants, a majority (86%) were females. Although the finding is similar to the general representation of the female gender in public schooling, the

skewed sample would appear to limit male response and representation in the study. However, in that such over-representation of females exists at the primary public education level (Collie et al., 2012), this study's findings may be applicable or generalizable in most settings and classrooms in public schools.

Summary of Results

The findings reflected a statistically significant difference in perceived efficacy of SEL implementation between teachers who applied SEL concepts within their classrooms and teachers who did not. The survey item reflecting the greatest degree of response effect favoring study participants who apply SEL training principles on a regular basis was "I promote SEL in the classroom setting". Moreover, the responses for all survey items on the research instrument favored study participants who apply the SEL training principles on a regular basis.

Discussion by Research Questions

Research Question 1

Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the classroom between the teachers who apply concepts learned in SEL training regularly and teachers who do not?

A *t*-test of independent means was used to evaluate the statistical significance of difference in the comparison featured in research question one. As a result, a statistically significant difference in perceptions between teachers who apply concepts learned in the SEL training on a regular basis and those who do not apply the concepts on a regular basis was manifested in the analysis.

The results obtained in research question one would appear to attest to the positive attribution of the SEL initiative. Perception is based upon previous experiences and influenced by the individual's ability to decipher concepts learned and experienced (Akyol, 2016; Bates &

Jacobs, 2020; Lee et al., 2019). As such, and with a positive mindset approach, individuals may have tremendous confidence in their craft and avoid succumbing to their established mental models if specific, effectual training is provided. Although different teaching styles help serve a more diverse student population, updated and highly effective instruction, such as the case in the provision of SEL training, needs to focus on both school- and district-level efforts.

Additionally, the study's finding in research question one appears to reinforce the importance of creating training concepts conducive to increasing the confidence of individuals in training. The perception with which an educator approaches SEL in the classroom may impact the classroom culture in general (Akyol, 2016; Lee et al., 2019; Mrazek et al., 2018). One of the primary purposes of the SEL training module featured in the study was to increase teacher confidence in new concepts presented and discussed. The effectiveness appears to have been predicated on one central notion: the role of perceptions. The study provided invaluable feedback for educational leaders regarding the importance of perceptions and their subsequent impact upon teacher confidence in shaping a positive classroom culture. One of the specific skills presented in the SEL training module that appears to have benefited the implementation of SEL was that of role modeling the various competencies of SEL to students. According to Lee et al. (2019), the application of SEL has many factors that cause a variance in its effectiveness. One of the factors discussed in this article is teachers' perceptions of SEL. Although Lee et al. (2019) highlighted the positive relationship between SEL, primary student achievement, and adult productivity, their study contained evidence supporting the notion that teachers' perceptions play a critical role in implementing SEL in the classroom. The results and discussions of Lee et al. (2019) support the results found in this current study, including the research supporting the factors influencing the implementation of SEL. In essence, teacher perceptions of confidence can

significantly impact actual confidence in applying elements of SEL, which in turn positively

impact classroom cultures and subsequently influence student achievement.

Research Question 2

Considering the elements of SEL identified in the training module, which item was the

most significant degree of difference between the teachers who applied the SEL elements

regularly and those teachers who did not?

The Cohen's *d* statistical technique was used to examine the degree of difference in the

comparisons represented in research question two. As a result, more than half (n = 8) of the

comparisons of SEL elements described on the research instrument were manifested to a

statistically significant degree, favoring participants applying SEL regularly in their classrooms.

The element of SEL reflecting the greatest magnitude of the effect was item seven (I promote

social-emotional learning in the classroom setting).

Ng (2018) found that a teacher who promotes social-emotional learning in the classroom

helped improve the teacher-student relationship. The current study's finding for survey item

seven would appear to support previous research on the topic and highlight the starting point of

the process in supporting efforts to instill interest in SEL itself. This finding also appears to

corroborate research focusing on the positive influences of promoting SEL in the classroom

setting. Based on data obtained, participants who answered favorably to item seven (I promote

social-emotional learning in the classroom setting*)* exuded more confidence and responded

favorably to other items such as high self-awareness, trauma-informed care practices, and

teacher-student relation.

The findings achieved in research question two would appear to facilitate educator

understanding and possible appreciation for the role of teaching. Other SEL elements or concepts

may be influenced positively by applying specific training sessions to professional development sessions. Previous researchers on the topic found supportive evidence of the mindset's influence on motivation and found that an individual's perspective is based on their perceptions of their surroundings (Corradi et al., 2019). The current study's findings support a positive approach to teaching SEL concepts and the importance of regular application of the training concepts in facilitating a positive classroom culture. Central to this solution are educator perceptions of SEL necessity in the classroom setting and their subsequent perceptions of efficacy in applying SEL concepts regularly (Corradi et al., 2019; Mrazek et al., 2018; Ng, 2018).

Interestingly, the element of SEL that reflected the greatest magnitude of difference between teachers who regularly apply SEL in the classroom and those who do not, reinforces previous research on the benefits of applying SEL in the classroom. Kasler and Elias (2012) pointed out some of the SEL benefits enjoyed through a sustainable implementation approach. Kasler and Elias (2012) stated that, critically, SEL could be promoted despite challenges in the surrounding. With the focus on gathering data about improving classroom settings, the current study highlighted the significance of promoting SEL and its subsequent impact in other areas such as confidence in the trauma-informed approach, student-teacher relational approach, promotion of safe environment for all students, and self-care. Given the current situation in public education during the pandemic era, the significance of promoting SEL would appear to encourage educators to adopt fidelity in their approach to applying SEL in the classroom to maximize the benefit experienced by students and educators alike.

Study Limitations

The time frame during which the study was conducted presented various challenges, thereby limiting some aspects of conducting the research. The pandemic affected the usual daily

routines in most major societal locations and presented a substantial deadly health challenge, including forcing most developed countries to quarantine their population. These challenges caused a significant mental health impact and an imminent public health challenge (Stark et al., 2020). As a result of these challenges, public education shifted to digital learning to amend for lost time due to mandated quarantine. The anxiety level caused by these endangering factors made countless stressors on all individuals and created barriers such as loss of comfort (trust) between individuals and the failure of social interaction (Miotto et al., 2020; Stark et al., 2020). Although an appreciable participant response rate was achieved, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. All the stressors mentioned above may have impacted some aspects of this study or the participants' responses.

The sampling method used in this study was limited to a non-probability, convenient approach. Although the study's findings may appear intuitive and generally applicable within the field of education, generalizations of the study's findings were limited to the population from which the sample was accessed.

The study was limited to a quantitative, non-experimental approach. Although the quantitative approach allowed for more significant numbers of participants in the study, study participant responses to the construct measured were limited to closed structure survey items. The study did not probe more deeply to ascertain richer and thicker responses to the construct being measured. A different approach such as qualitative or mixed may offer a more in-depth perspective of participants' mindset on this topic.

The method of collection or the type of research used is not the only research parameter that limits this study. The instrument relied on participants' perceptions to gather responses to the item of the survey. Perceptions may differ from one individual to the next based on the

individual's experiences and background surroundings. This study did not rely on observation or behaviors, making for possible individual influences despite the strong response and completion rates obtained.

Implications for Future Practice

The primary focus of the study was upon an evaluation of teachers' perceptions of efficacy in implementing SEL training concepts relative to their status in applying the concepts in the classroom setting. Discovering teachers' perceptions on the matter can help educational leaders with two aspects. First, it was important to understand the teachers' experiences and their perception of SEL implementation overall. Without applying empathy as education leaders, classroom teachers cannot be expected to role model empathy towards students. The study's findings support the differences in teacher confidence in addressing SEL in the classroom when SEL training is regularly applied in their professional practice.

Second, it would appear important to incorporate valuable feedback from the study's findings to design uplifting and up-to-date training modules for teachers. Adequacy, relatedness, and efficacy should be the focus in developing these training to ensure that all trainees understand the true purpose of the sessions. Hands-on demonstration and modeling of practical steps should be incorporated into the recommended training.

Furthermore, educational leaders must ensure continuity if a change in perception of SEL is expected. For any training concepts to be implemented, teachers must earnestly commit to the process. It may be said that the requirement of the teaching position may lie in the adherence to the mandated rules and regulations of the profession. However, the goal should be for teachers to practice professionally beyond mere rules and regulations following a higher commitment to effectiveness in practices that support student well-being. Site-based administrators must find

ways to balance the satisfaction of mandated goals while promoting teacher commitment to effectual implementation of SEL practice. As SEL content is now embedded into the main curriculum, classroom teachers are still expected to be efficient on concepts they have not been adequately trained for during their schooling or professional development. Training such as Kognito helps to mitigate this existing gap in SEL knowledge and practice for teachers.

A key point of focus in the study was upon SEL's implementation. Role modeling must become a central part of the inclusion of SEL competencies. As previously mentioned, the holistic approach includes the academic, personal, and social aspects of an individual's being. The SEL competencies focus on the social aspects by nature and definition, which may optimize the academic instruction. If SEL is not implemented, SEL cannot effectively help students learn how to understand and manage their emotions. From educational leaders in the district to classroom teachers, SEL would appear to be a critical skill to acquire in the professional development process to be applied effectively and consistently. The role modeling initiative at the center of SEL programming would appear to encourage increased teacher commitment, change teacher perceptions (mindset), and increase teacher confidence in implementing training concepts in the classroom.

Finally, teachers should understand the importance of the trauma-informed care approach both in their training sessions and in how they connect to SEL competencies. Although some individuals may not be comfortable with some demands of new SEL concepts featured in the training module, understanding the rationale for the strategy may help increase the adoption of SEL principles. Considerable efforts and strong support from school administrators are necessary to encourage the proper implementation of SEL concepts in the classroom following the training received during professional development. Teachers need to feel supported to positively perceive

SEL training sessions and understand the potential benefits. The mindset and understanding with which the teachers approach SEL concepts can influence their willingness to commit to implementation. The study's findings support the notion that teachers who more vigorously embrace SEL principles and apply the principles regularly in their classrooms subsequently perceive themselves as more effectual in the application of SEL principles than their peers who do not apply the principles regularly in the professional practice. With a positive and embracing perspective of SEL, educational leaders may expect a higher rate of teacher commitment and increased efficacy as the mindset changes from administrators to those directly educating students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The effects of the global pandemic have led to many modifications in the public-school setting throughout the academic year. As such, the study should be replicated during a non-pandemic time frame to minimize some of the pandemic effects. The replication of study procedures would be free of any profound influence from the current pandemic that affected so many areas of society. Additionally, given this study's heavy reliance on individual perception, the possibility of an impact on aspects of this research is inevitable. Replicating this study post-COVID-19 era may provide a greater perspective on evaluating the study's construct and a point of comparison.

The sample accessed for study purposes was non-probability and convenient in nature. A probability sampling approach might be adopted for future studies to maximize representation within the research and generalize results to a greater population. In addition, the current study's sample was accessed from one school district located in one state in the southeastern United

States. Future studies may be conducted accessing a representative sample from the state featured in the study using stratified randomization.

Future studies may involve a qualitative approach to addressing the research problem. Qualitative studies have the advantage of requiring fewer participants, with the information obtained representing richer, deeper, and thicker perspectives on the study's topic. Additionally, consideration may be afforded to a mixed-methods approach to addressing the study's topic. The mixed-methods approach would combine the strengths of the quantitative and qualitative research design approaches while potentially mitigating the weaknesses of each approach through triangulation of finding.

Lastly, the study's data were achieved through study participant perceptions on the construct rather than actual behavior manifestation. Future studies might be focused upon utilizing other research methods such as observation to strengthen findings on the study's construct.

Conclusion

This study focused on evaluating teachers' perceptions of their level of preparedness for the classroom on SEL matters. The inclusion of SEL competencies in the daily operations and curriculum delivery by teachers within the school district are the first line of contact with students in the classroom. In establishing a uniform but equitable approach throughout the district, the study results can help start the conversation on creating more substantial capacity through training sessions provided by educational leaders and meaningful professional development. Teachers are the engine through which education works (Bates & Jacobs, 2020), and their perception of SEL content implementation should be valued. The challenge of practical implementation in the classroom can be met by including teachers in developing good training

sessions. This initiative can help raise the level of preparedness of classroom teachers. A more inclusive approach can positively impact classroom teachers' approach to SEL implementation in their classrooms. The perceptions of classroom teachers can be valuable feedback to increase effectiveness in implementing SEL in the classroom.

References

Akyol, B. (2016). Teacher self-efficacy perceptions, learning oriented motivation, lifelong learning tendencies of candidate teachers: A modeling study. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *16*(65), 1–35. https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2016.65.02

American School Counseling Association. (2012). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs* (3rd ed.). ASCA.

Annamma, S., & Morrison, D. (2018). Identifying dysfunctional education ecologies: A disCrit analysis of bias in the classroom. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *51*(2), 114–131. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2018.1496047

Bast, D. F., Lyons, C., Stewart, I., Connor, T., Kelly, M., & Goyos, C. (2020). The effect of educational messages on implicit and explicit attitudes towards individuals on the autism spectrum versus normally developing individuals. *Psychological Record*, *70*(1), 123–145. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40732-019-00363-4

Bates, C. J., & Jacobs, R. A. (2020). Efficient data compression in perception and perceptual memory. *Psychological Review*, *127*(5), 891–917. https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000197

Berman, S. (2018). *What we've learned about implementing social-emotional learning. AASA*. http://my.aasa.org/AASA/Resources/SAMag/2018/Sep18/Berman.aspx

Blodgett, C., & Lanigan, J. D. (2018). The association between adverse childhood experience (ACE) and school success in elementary school children. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *33*(1), 137–146. htpps://doi.org/10.1037/spq/0000256

Bohanon, H., Wahnschaff, A., Flaherty, P., & Ferguson, K. (2018). Leading schools under pressure: Considerations of systems theory and schoolwide positive behavior support efforts during school actions. *School Community Journal*, *28*(1), 195–216.

Boylan, F., Barblett, L., & Knaus, M. (2018). Early childhood teachers' perspectives of growth

    mindset: Developing agency in children. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, *43*(3),

    16–24. https://doi.org/10.23965/AJEC.43.3.02

Brandt, R. S. (1986). On improving achievement of minority children: A conversation with

    James Comer. *Educational Leadership*, *43*(5), 13.

Buchanan, R., Gueldner, B. A., Tran, O. K., & Merrell, K. W. (2009). Social and emotional

    learning in classrooms: A survey of teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and practices.

    Journal of Applied School Psychology, *25*(2), 187–203.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/15377900802487078

Caldarella, P., Williams, L., Jolstead, K. A., & Wills, H. P. (2017a). Managing student behavior

    in an elementary school music classroom: A study of class-wide function-related

    intervention teams. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, *35*(3), 23–30.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123315626229

Cárdenas-Figueroa, A., & Navarro, A. O. (2020). Overview of mental models research using

    bibliometric indicators. *Cognitive Processing*, *21*(2), 155–165.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s10339-020-00956-w

Chen, C., & Tang, N. (2017). *Does perceived inclusion matter in the workplace? 33*(1), 43–57.

    https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-02-2017-0078

Coleman, D., Black, N., Ng, J., & Blumenthal, E. (2019). Kognito's avatar-based suicide

    prevention training for college students: Results of a randomized controlled trial and a

    naturalistic evaluation. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, *49*(6), 1735–1745.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12550

Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., & Perry, N. E. (2012). School climate and social-emotional learning: Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *104*(4), 1189–1204.

Comer, J.P., (1988). Educating Poor Minority Children. *Scientific American*, *259*(5), 42-49. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24989262

Corradi, D., Nicolaï, J., & Levrau, F. (2019). Growth mindset and its predictive validity—Do migration background and academic validation matter? *Higher Education*, *77*(3), 491–504. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0286-6

Crandall, A., Powell, E. A., Bradford, G. C., Magnusson, B. M., Hanson, C. L., Barnes, M. D., Novilla, M. L. B., & Bean, R. A. (2020). Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a framework for understanding adolescent depressive symptoms over time. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *29*(2), 273–281. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-019-01577-4

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications Inc.

Dodge, K. A., Bierman, K. L., Coie, J. D., Greenberg, M. T., Lochman, J. E., McMahon, R. J., Pinderhughes, E. E., & for the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group. (2015). Impact of early intervention on psychopathology, crime, and well-being at age 25. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *172*(1), 59–70. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2014.13060786

Dominguez, M. M., & Carton, J. S. (1997). The relationship between self-actualization and parenting style. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, *12*(4), 1093–1100.

Domjan, M., Cusato, B., & Villarreal, R. (2000). Pavlovian feed-forward mechanisms in the

    control of social behavior. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *23*(2), 235–249.

    https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00002430

Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Schellinger, K. B., & Taylor, R. D. (2011). The

    impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-

    based universal interventions. *Child Development*, *82*(1), 405–432.

Elias, M. J. (2009). Social-emotional and character development and academics as a dual focus

    of educational policy. *Educational Policy*, *23*(6), 831–846.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904808330167

Elias, M. J., & Weissberg, R. P. (2000). Primary prevention: Educational approaches to enhance

    social and emotional learning. *Journal of School Health*, *70*(5), 186–190.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2000.tb06470.x

Erford, B. T. (2015). *Transforming the school counseling profession* (4th ed.). Pearson Education

    Inc.

Fraser, D. M. (2018). An exploration of the application and implementation of growth mindset

    principles within a primary school. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *88*(4),

    645–658. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12208

Garrity, S. M., & Longstreth, S. L. (2019). Using the teaching abd guidance policy essentials

    checklist to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate behavior guidance policies.

    Early Childhood Education Journal, *48*, 71–77. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-

    00978-w

George, D., & Mallory, P. (2018). *IBM SPSS statistics 25 step by step: A simple guide and

    reference* (15th ed.). Routledge Taylor & Francis.

Graczyk, P. A., Matjasko, J. L., Weissberg, R. P., Greenberg, M. T., Elias, M. J., & Zins, J. E.

    (2000). The role of the collaborative to advance social and emotional learning (CASEL)

    in supporting the implementation of quality school-based prevention programs. *Journal*

    of Educational & Psychological Consultation, *11*(1), 3.

    https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532768XJEPC1101_2

Greif Green, J., Levine, R. S., Oblath, R., Corriveau, K. H., Holt, M. K., & Albright, G. (2020).

    Pilot evaluation of preservice teacher training to improve preparedness and confidence to

    address student mental health. *Evidence-Based Practice in Child & Adolescent Mental*

    Health, *5*(1), 42–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/23794925.2020.1727793

Gresham, F. M., & Elliott, S. N. (2008). Social skills improvement system (SSSI) rating scales.

    SSIS Rating Scales. Pearson Education Inc.

Gryglewicz, K., Childs, K. K., & Soderstrom, M. F. P. (2018). An evaluation of youth mental

    health first aid training in school settings. *School Mental Health*, *10*(1), 48–60.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-018-9246-7

Hart, S. C., DiPerna, J. C., Lei, P.-W., & Cheng, W. (2020). Nothing lost, something gained?

    Impact of a universal social-emotional learning program on future state test performance.

    Educational Researcher, *49*(1), 5–19. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X19898721

High school teachers latest trainees in N.Y. Suicide Prevention Initiative. (2011). *Brown*

    University Child & Adolescent Behavior Letter, *27*(11), 4–4.

Hochanadel, A., & Finamore, D. (2015). Fixed and growth mindset in education and how grit

    helps students persist in the face of adversity. *Journal of International Education*

    Research (JIER), *11*(1), 47. https://doi.org/10.19030/jier.v11i1.9099

Hunter, L. J., DiPerna, J. C., Hart, S. C., & Crowley, M. (2018). At what cost? Examining the

    cost effectiveness of a universal social–emotional learning program. *School Psychology*

    Quarterly, *33*(1), 147–154. https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000232

Jenson, W. R., Olympia, D., Farley, M., & Clark, E. (2004). Positive psychology and

    externalizing students in a sea of negativity. *Psychology in the Schools*, *41*(1), 67–79.

    https://doi.org/10.1105/pits.10139

Karatekin, C. (2018). Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), stress and mental health in college

    students. *Stress & Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of*

    Stress, *34*(1), 36–45. https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.2761

Kasler, J., & Elias, M. J. (2012). Holding the line: Sustaining an SEL-driven whole-school

    approach in a time of transition. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*,

    22(3), 227–246. htpps://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2012.706130

Kress, J. S., & Elias, M. J. (2006). School-based social and emotional learning programs. In K.

    A. Renninger, I. E. Sigel, W. Damon, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child*

    psychology: Child psychology in practice., Vol. 4, 6th ed. (2006-08778-015; pp. 592–

    618). John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Lee, J., Yang, Y., & Zuilkowski, S. S. (2019). A multiple-group confirmatory factor analysis of

    teacher perceptions of social and emotional learning in rural Malawi. *British Journal of*

    Educational Psychology, *89*(4), 600–615. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12247

Mahoney, J. L., Weissberg, R. P., Greenberg, M. T., Dusenbury, L., Jagers, R. J., Niemi, K.,

    Schlinger, M., Schlund, J., Shriver, T. P., VanAusdal, K., & Yoder, N. (2020). Systemic

    social and emotional learning: Promoting educational success for all preschool to high

    school students. *American Psychologist*. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000701

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*(4), 370–396.

Meyers, D. C., Domitrovich, C. E., Dissi, R., Trejo, J., & Greenberg, M. T. (2019). Supporting

systemic social and emotional learning with a schoolwide implementation model.

Evaluation and Program Planning, *73*, 53–61.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2018.11.005

Miotto, K., Sanford, J., Brymer, M. J., Bursch, B., & Pynoos, R. S. (2020). Implementing an

emotional support and mental health response plan for healthcare workers during the

COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*,

12(S1), S165–S167. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000918

Mrazek, A. J., Ihm, E. D., Molden, D. C., Mrazek, M. D., Zedelius, C. M., & Schooler, J. W.

(2018). Expanding minds: Growth mindsets of self-regulation and the influences on effort

and perseverance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *79*, 164–180.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.07.003

Müller, R., & Antoni, C. H. (2020). Individual perceptions of shared mental models of

information and communication technology (ICT) and virtual team coordination and

performance—The moderating role of flexibility in ICT use. *Group Dynamics: Theory,*

Research, and Practice, *24*(3), 186–200. https://doi.org/10.1037/gdn0000130

Ng, B. (2018). The neuroscience of growth mindset and intrinsic motivation. *Brain Sciences*

(2076-3425), *8*(2), 20. https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci8020020

Ngoh, N. (2018). Factors that impact the evaluation of teacher evaluation of teacher effectiveness

for reappointment, tenure and promotion. *Journal for the Advancement of Educational*

Research International, *12*(1), 15–24.

Oberle, E., Domitrovich, C. E., Meyers, D. C., & Weissberg, R. (2016). Establishing systemic

    social and emotional learning approaches in schools: A framework for schoolwide

    implementation. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *46*(3), 277–297.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764x.2015.1125450

Papay, J. P., Bacher-Hicks, A., Page, L. C., & Marinell, W. H. (2017). The challenge of teacher

    retention in urban schools: Evidence of variation from a cross-site analysis. *Educational*

    Researcher, *46*(8), 434–448. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X17735812

Pawlo, E., Lorenzo, A., Eichert, B., & Elias, M. J. (2019). All SEL should be trauma-informed.

    Phi Delta Kappan, *101*(3), 37–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003172171988519

Payton, J. W., Wardlaw, D. M., Graczyk, P. A., Bloodworth, M. R., Tompsett, C. J., & Weissberg,

    R. P. (2000). Social and emotional learning: A framework for promoting mental health

    and reducing risk behavior in children and youth. *Journal of School Health*, *70*(5), 179–

    185. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2000.tb06468.x

Poulou, M. S. (2017). *Students' emotional and behavioral difficulties: The role of teachers'*

    social and emotional learning and teacher-student relationships, *9*(2), 72-89.

Rein, B. A., McNeil, D. W., Hayes, A. R., Hawkins, T. A., Ng, H. M., & Yura, C. A. (2018).

    Evaluation of an avatar-based training program to promote suicide prevention awareness

    in a college setting, *Journal of American College Health*, *66*(5), 401–411.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2018.1432626

Reising, B. (1997). The writings of James Comer. *Clearing House*, *71*(1), 5-6.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/00098659709599313

Rettie, H., & Daniels, J. (2020). Coping and tolerance of uncertainty: Predictors and mediators of

    mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Psychologist, 76*(3), 427-437.

    https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000710

Sawilowsky, S. S. (2009). New effect size rules of thumb. *Journal of Modern Applied Statistical*

    Methods, *8*(2), 597-599. https://doi.org//jmasm/1257035100

Schiepe-Tiska, A., Dzhaparkulova, A., & Ziernwald, L. (2021). A mixed-methods approach to

    investigating social and emotional learning at schools: Teachers' familiarity, beliefs,

    training, and perceived school culture. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 518-634.

    https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.518634

Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2017). Social emotional learning and teachers. *The Future of Children*,

    27(1).

Schultz, D. P., & Schultz, S. E. (2016). *A history of modern psychology* (11th ed.). Wadsworth

    Cengage Learning.

Scrimin, S., Moscardino, U., Altoè, G., & Mason, L. (2018). Attentional bias for academic

    stressors and classroom climate predict adolescents' grades and socioemotional

    functioning. *Journal of Research on Adolescence (Wiley-Blackwell)*, *28*(1), 245–258.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12329

Seaman, J., Brown, M., & Quay, J. (2017). The evolution of experiential learning theory: Tracing

    lines of research in the JEE. *Journal of Experiential Education*, *40*(4), NP1–NP21.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1053825916689268

Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline* (Kindle). Doubleday Publishing Group, Inc.

Shao, J., & Müller, R. (2011). The development of constructs of program context and program

    success: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Project Management*, *29*(8), 947–

    959. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2011.02.003

Stark, A. M., White, A. E., Rotter, N. S., & Basu, A. (2020). Shifting from survival to supporting

    resilience in children and families in the COVID-19 pandemic: Lessons for informing US

    mental health priorities. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*,

    12(S1), S133–S135. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000781

Sullivan, E. (2016). *Teachers' perceptions of and self-efficacy in modeling and providing*

    opportunities for social and emotional learning competencies [Doctoral Dissertation,

    John & Wales Univeristy]. ProQuest Information & Learning.

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.128664

U.S. Department of Education. (2020). U.S. Department of Education. https://www.ed.gov/

Weissberg, R. P., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). Social and emotional learning:

    Past, present, and future. In *Handbook for social and emotional learning* (pp. 3–19).

    Guilford.

Wissehr, C., Concannon, J., & Barrow, L. H. (2011). Looking back at the Sputnik era and its

    impact on science education. *School Science and Mathematics*, *111*(7), 368–375.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1949-8594.2011.00099.x

Yang, C., Bear, G. G., May, H., & Curby, T. (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.

    https://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017-0003.V47-1

Zhai, F., Raver, C. C., & Jones, S. M. (2015). Social and emotional learning services and child

    outcomes in third grade: Evidence from a cohort of Head Start participants. *Children and*

    Youth Services Review, 56, 42-51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth2015.06.016

Zhang, G., & Zeller, N. (2016). A longitudinal investigation of the relationship between teacher

    preparation and teacher retention. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *43*(2), 73-92.

Appendix A

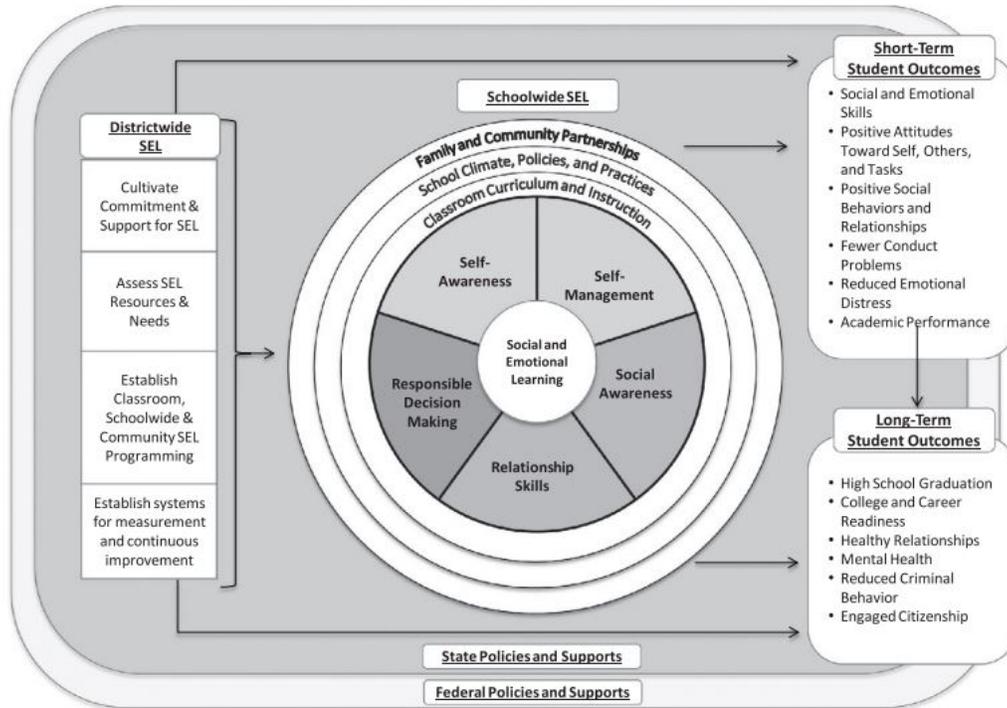## Conceptual Model for System-Wide SEL

Figure 1. Conceptual model illustrating system-wide SEL in educational settings. Source: Figure 1 was originally published in Weissberg et al. (2015).

(Weissberg et al., 2015)

Dissertation Survey Instrument

***Please indicate which best describes you in the following:**

***Gender:**

___ **Female**

___ **Male**

***Years of Professional Service:**

___ **5 Years or Less**

___ **6-10 Years**

___ **11-20 Years**

___ **21 Years or More**

***Educational Degree:**

___ **Undergraduate Degree (Bachelor)**

___ **Graduate Degree (Masters; Specialist; Doctorate)**

***Training Module Application Status:**

___ **I apply the *Kognito* training module techniques on a regular basis in my**

classroom

___ **I do not apply the *Kognito* training module techniques on a regular basis in my**

classroom

*Directions:

Please indicate the response that best indicates your perceptions within each of the following statements using the scale provided:

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

My understanding of trauma in elementary students is satisfactory.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am confident in my ability to recognize the signs of trauma in students.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am proficient in my ability to lead impactful conversations with students.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am confident in my ability to bring trauma-informed practices to my school district.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

My comfort level in teacher-student relationships is exceptional.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am confident in my ability to create a safer environment for students

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I promote SEL in the classroom setting.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am confident in knowledge and awareness about the types of experiences that can cause distress or trauma in elementary-aged children.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am able to recognize when a student's behavior might be the result of trauma or distress.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am proficient in leading conversations with a student about how they might be feeling.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am confident in my ability to have difficult conversations with students.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am confident in my ability to problem-solve ways that my classroom can become a more comfortable place for students who have experienced trauma.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am proficient in assessing the need for referral, motivating students to seek help when needed

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree

I am keenly aware of my own needs for self-care.

5 – Strongly Agree   4 - Agree   3 – Uncertain   2 – Disagree   1 – Strongly Disagree