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**MOVING THE NEEDLE: IMPACTING TEACHERS' PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT
STUDENTS' SEL DEVELOPMENT**

TAMMI Y. DOCKETT-WILSON

A DISSERTATION

In the

Isabelle Farrington College of Education and Human Development

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STUDENTS' SEL DEVELOPMENT

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TAMMI Y. DOCKETT-WILSON

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Abstract

MOVING THE NEEDLE: IMPACTING TEACHERS' PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT STUDENTS' SEL DEVELOPMENT

TAMMI Y. DOCKETT-WILSON

T. Lee Morgan, Ph.D., Dissertation Chair

Research has shown how students' social-emotional development impacts their lives beyond school and the benefits social-emotional development has had on academic growth, as social-emotional development and academics, worked in unison (Locklear, 2020). Therefore, students should receive support in developing their social-emotional learning skills while they are receiving academic instruction (Yoder, 2014b). One suggested way to accomplish this goal is to provide teachers with the knowledge about social-emotional learning, followed by supporting them through their social-emotional learning implementations (Ferguson-Patrick, 2010). This Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice utilized a convergent mixed methods intervention design to interact with the six research partners, who taught Kindergarten through Grade 5 in a rural district in the southern region of the United States. Through the behavior theory framework, specifically, the social environment and social cognitive theoretical frameworks, the researcher provided personalized professional learning and reflective coaching practice sessions to support the research partners implementation of cooperative learning strategies, which was the selected instructional practice that supports social-emotional learning.

During the research study, the research partners participated in semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, reflective coaching practice sessions, pre- and post- AIR Self-Assessments of SEL Survey (Yoder, 2014a) and a personalized professional development session. As a result of the ongoing support during the implementation phase of the intervention,

the research partners and their students exhibited growth in both their social-emotional development and their academics. The quantitative data results for research question one reflected a significant difference from the beginning to the end with a moderate effect size for the group. However, the effect size for the individual research partners were large. Per the qualitative data, in response to research question two, one research partner stated, “I can see where its leading and this is why I want to continue doing it this way. My students are getting more and more engaged.” Therefore, the research findings demonstrated how the research partners were moving the needle towards improving their students’ social-emotional development. Furthermore, the study enumerated four recommendations to continue the positive social-emotional development and academic growth the research partners began.

Keywords: social-emotional, instructional practices, cooperative learning, convergent mixed methods, reflective coaching, implementation

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“My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be humans together” (Desmond Tutu, 1984).

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Chapter 1 Introduction:

Research has shown that the implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) impacts the classroom environment positively and addresses the needs of the whole child simultaneously (Schonfeld et al., 2015). Therefore, Schonfeld et al.'s (2015) stance aligned with the ultimate goal of developing students' social-emotional and academic development, which had a direct correlation to emotional intelligence (EI), and impacted varying aspects of the students' future (i.e., employment, health) (Espelage et al., 2018; Keefer et al., 2018; Rivera-Pérez et al., 2020; Sanchez-Gomez et al., 2021; Wisniewski & Foster, 2020). This improvement science investigation focused on contributing teachers' practices that support SEL which directly and indirectly influenced students' social-emotional and academic development. Consequently, the contributing factor was also the problem of practice. The researcher used a convergent mixed methods intervention design as a guiding framework for the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), which allowed both quantitative and qualitative data collection to guide the professional learning session (PLS) that included reflective coaching/practice (RCP) and practices that support SEL aspects of the intervention phase. The data collection process consisted of environmental scan interviews, end-user consultations, teacher self-assessments (Yoder, 2014a), classroom observations, documents review, reflective coaching notes, and process understanding interviews. The discussion of findings section disclosed the results of the intervention's influence on teachers' practices that support SEL.

Background

Brown v. Board of Education is a landmark case where the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was unconstitutional, and is familiar to many. However, *Briggs v Elliott* (1952) was a case that many are unfamiliar with (Allen, 2019). The case was about a small rural school funding plight. Still today, rural school districts are grappling with funding issues that impact their ability to provide adequate programming for students, retain excellent teachers, offer quality professional development, etc. (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015).

Beyond funding concerns, overlooking rural districts as research locations has become standard practice; therefore, insufficient data are available to make sound comparisons about SEL programs effectiveness with students in rural districts compared to students in urban districts (Durlak et al., 2011; O’Conner et al., 2017). Nonetheless, experts suggest that SEL programs can be successful in any location, including rural school districts (Durlak et al., 2011). Furthermore, research supports intentional and creative leadership when planning professional development, as well as utilizing collaboration with other partners who are willing to invest the time (Harmon, 2017; Zolkoski et al., 2020). Therefore, the researcher purposefully chose to seek a partnership with a rural district to fulfill the aim of this study by introducing the foundation of SEL and utilizing research-based practices to build teacher capacity to support SEL.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) developed the social and emotional learning (SEL) framework and the five core competencies (Oberle et al., 2016).

The first three core competencies of SEL are self-awareness, or accurately recognizing the influence emotions and thoughts have on behavior; self-management, or effectively knowing how to control emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in various situations; and social awareness, or appropriately empathizing and understanding different cultures, behavioral norms, family

dynamics, and support structures within the community (CASEL, 2020). The remaining two core competencies of SEL are responsible decision-making, or conscientiously making productive and considerate choices that impact all aspects of personal and social behaviors while associating with others; and relationship skills, or successfully establishing and maintaining healthy interactions with varied individuals that are rewarding (CASEL, 2020). Furthermore, having an environment that is emotionally warm and safe positions the students for both academic and SEL success (Shewark et al., 2018).

Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) stress that students learning in an environment that embraces their SEL and academic growth have a better chance at thriving in all aspects of their lives. Likewise, similar research by Kendziora and Yoder (2016) supports Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) position, and advocates districts creating policies and structures that support building administrators and teachers integrating SEL strategies within their academic lessons. For example, embedding all or any combination of the 10 instructional practices that support SEL into the daily lessons would allow the students' SEL development to flourish (Yoder, 2014b). Moreover, Weissberg (2019) agrees with the aforementioned researchers and adds that the schools are practical locations for modeling and teaching the SEL competencies.

Therefore, after a conversation with Mr. Browning, Superintendent, Mann School District (MSD) (all names are pseudonyms), about the aim of the improvement science dissertation in practice (ISDiP), he arranged a presentation time with the elementary school principals and the executive director of curriculum and instruction. Following the presentation, the four MSD personnel (i.e., superintendent, two principals, and executive director of curriculum and instruction) agreed unanimously to allow both elementary schools, Alliance and

Sunrise, to participate in the ISDiP with hopes of gaining knowledge that would assist them in ensuring they are preparing their students for success holistically. Mr. Browning granted the researcher full access to the principals, teachers, and any records needed. Further data pertinent to the campuses unfolded in the subsequent passage.

Research Setting

Mann School District, a small rural district educating 982 students, is located in the southern region of the United States whose student demographics reflected African American, 68.1%; Asian, 0.4%; European American, 17.6%; Latinx, 12.7%; Native American, 0.2%; and Two or More Races, 1.0%, was the location for the ISDiP. The schools actively engaged in the project were Alliance Elementary School (AES), Pre-kindergarten through Grade 2, and Sunrise Elementary School (SES), Grade 3 through Grade 6. The demographics of the students, AES and SES, respectively, consisted of African American, 62.8% / 75.1%; Asian American, 0.0% / 0.3%; European American, 23.5% / 14.5%; Latinx, 12.7% / 9.8%; Native American, 0.5% / 0.0%; and Two or More Races, 0.5% / 0.3%. Table 1 shows the demographics for the district and both elementary schools.

Table 1

District and Schools Configuration and Demographics with Enrollment

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Alliance Elementary</i>	<i>Sunrise Elementary</i>	<i>Mann School District</i>
<i>Grades Served</i>	Pk-2 (221)	3-6 (297)	Pk-12 (982)
<i>African American</i>	62.8% (139)	75.1% (223)	68.1% (669)
<i>Asian American</i>	0% (0)	0.3% (1)	0.4% (4)
<i>European American</i>	23.5% (52)	14.5% (43)	17.6% (173)
<i>Latinx</i>	12.7% (28)	9.8% (29)	12.7% (124)
<i>Native American</i>	0.5% (1)	0% (0)	0.2% (2)
<i>Two or More Races</i>	0.5% (1)	0.3% (1)	1.0% (10)

The quality of the teachers, leadership, and school climate contributed to the learning environment and students' academic and social successes in immeasurable ways (CSAI &

WestEd, 2016; Voight et al., 2013). Therefore, learning the current status of the educational team leading the instructional programs for the students on each campus was vital, as it yielded instrumental in determining the direction of future planning, expectations, and successes (Gialamas et al., 2020; Mullen, 2017).

After viewing the state department of education’s published records, the following teacher and leadership data for the district and schools provided insight into the benefit of partnering with MSD for the research. The average teaching experience was 7.69 years for the school district, 8.80 years for AES, and 12.03 years for SES, two of the four schools in the school district. In addition, the school district reported 86.1% of the teachers as certified. Whereas, the certified staff assigned to AES is 87.1% and 85.7% to SES. The educational status of the teachers and leadership on the campuses, AES and SES, respectively, were bachelor’s (59% / 53%) and master’s (22% / 33%) degrees. Table 2 illustrates teacher experience level in the district and at each elementary school.

Table 2

District and Schools Teacher Experience

Qualities	MSD	AES	SES
Average years teaching experience	7.69 years	8.80 years	12.03 years
Percentage of certified teachers	86.1% (111)	87.1% (24)	85.7% (26)
Percentage of alternative license plan (ALP) teachers	36.7%	43.75%	43.75%
Percentage of teachers having Bachelor’s	48%	59%	53%
Percentage of teachers / leadership having Master’s	28% / 100%	22% / 100%	33% / 100%
Percentage of teachers having Advanced Degree	1.0%		
Number of certified teachers	129	27	30
Number certified by National Board for Professional Teaching Standards			
Number of teachers teaching with licensure exceptions (AWL, CWL, or SOI)*	11	7	7
Number of inexperience teachers (less than 3 years teaching)	106	21	21
Percentage of inexperience teachers	82.2%	77.8%	70%
Number of teachers, principals, and assistant principals	138	28	32

Note. AWL – Act 1240 Waive Licensure, CWL – Charter School Waive Licensure, and SOI – Schools of Innovation.

The superintendent, Mr. Browning, who has been in education for more than 30 years and with the district as superintendent for eight years, was very familiar with his parents, students, community, and staff. During a conversation, Mr. Browning shared his passion for prioritizing students and removing barriers for them to be successful in life was his overarching focus. However, an issue that disrupted his overarching focus was retaining his teaching staff. The various influences of COVID-19 coupled with teacher retention concerns, which negatively impacted the district year to year, required Mr. Browning's attention equally (American Rescue Plan Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER), Section 2001 (e) (2), 2021). Therefore, the state department of education granted Mr. Browning's request to use some of the ARP ESSER, Section 2001 (e) (2) funds toward his teacher retention efforts (August, 2021; December 2021).

Having the teacher retention funding efforts addressed, Mr. Browning resumed focusing on addressing the teachers' and students' SEL development. Consequently, while discussing the aim of the research, Mr. Browning saw how the improvement science inquiry fit with his district by providing the teachers and students with an opportunity to learn about SEL, how to develop one's SEL, and how to implement SEL strategies in the classroom . Prior to meeting with potential research participants, the researcher learned the district was aware of the SEL resource provided by the state's department of education (i.e., G.U.I.D.E.) and that MSD's counselors referenced the resource in their comprehensive counseling plan (October 2021). However, that was the extent of the direct reference to SEL or SEL's implementation.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study was the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL. Per conversations with Mr. Browning, the two elementary principals, and executive

director of curriculum and instruction, a resource (i.e., G.U.I.D.E.) shared by the state department of education was available for supporting SEL; however, professional development, evaluations, monitoring, observations, or explicit instruction about SEL were missing. Therefore, utilizing an action research approach, which supports doing and solving problems, was fitting to address the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL) (Glesne, 2015). However, a more intentional approach to creating and building a sustainable change system was the improvement science process, which was the method by which the problem of practice unfolded (Perry et al., 2020). Yet, before creating any action steps within the improvement science process, the researcher had to validate the problem that existed in the context (Bryk et al., 2015; Crow et al., 2019; O'Leary, 2020; O'Leary, 2021). Validating the problem was the foundation of the causal system analysis and connected to the actions within the working theory of improvement cycle(s), which were critical to the success of the problem statement dissolving, as a new systematic method of existing emerged (Bryk et al., 2015; O'Leary, 2020).

Through literature, end-user consultations, environmental scans, and classroom observations, teachers lacking an understanding of SEL, teachers knowing how to structure the learning environment or implement SEL structures in the classroom, teachers receiving support for their SEL development, and more importantly, the students lacking SEL skills were interconnecting themes that linked back to the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL (Elias, 2019; Zieher et al., 2021). The root cause analysis section details the specifics revealed during the validation process, which led to the aim statement and creation of the intervention design plan that was instrumental throughout the improvement science inquiry.

Confidentiality

The researcher understanding the importance of relationships, transparency, and confidentiality, protected the identity of all participants, including the study location, with care and sensitivity (Yin, 2014). The researcher approached each participant amicably and respectfully. During the initial conversations, the participants received an explanation of the purpose of the research, along with the research procedures (see Appendices D & E). After acknowledging interest, the participants received information about the interview process, which included recording and transcription securities, as well as approaches for confidentiality and security through the storage on a passcode-protected electronic device. The participants understood if they chose to participate, they could withdraw at any time without penalty, as participation was voluntary.

Root Cause Analysis

The problem requiring deliberation in this study was the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL. An exploratory case study provided the platform to access this information. Yin (2014) and Glesne (2016) suggest that evidence for case studies may come from many sources of evidence. Therefore, reviewing documents, conducting classroom observations, performing environmental scan interviews, and end-user consultation interviews occurred to verify the perceived problem of practice, as they were the primary sources of information for Phase I of this improvement science inquiry, and the varied sources allowed triangulation for convergence and corroboration of the research findings to unfold in a systematic method when analyzing the sources (Glesne, 2016; Yin, 2014).

Document Review

A detailed review of the parent-student handbook revealed the words “social, emotional” or “emotional, social” appeared four times in the 95-page document. The first occurrence (p. 10) referred to the role of the school; the second occurrence (p. 13) referred to the role of the school nurse; the third occurrence (p. 85), the last occurrence (p. 85), addressed how students should receive assessments once assigned to the alternative learning environment. On each occasion, the meaning or a definition for the words was absent nor was an explicit statement detailing how the responsible entities were supporting the students’ social-emotional needs. Further exploration of the school counseling plan stated lessons based on specific competencies in academic, social-emotional, or career domains would occur as a direct service from the counselor, whose lessons are 40 minutes, cannot exceed three class sessions per day, nor exceed 10 class sessions per week. This delineation existed because the counselor performs indirect (i.e., consultation, referrals, and decision-making teams) services and administrative responsibilities (i.e., coordination of programs and data input, chairing committees and meetings, and supervising students in common areas) as well. Though no definition or statement explaining social and emotional learning was present in the document, on page 7, two links are available for counselors to reference when supporting students’ SEL needs.

Campus discipline incidents yielded the following key learning/analysis for AES and SES. Data reflected the students received discipline referrals for various disruptive behaviors (e.g., disturbing class, being disobedient, cursing/profanity, vandalism, obscene behavior, fighting, etc....). Closer analysis of the data disclosed “other” encompassed any infraction not located on the discipline code list (i.e., horseplay, cheating, dress code, etc....), 53%, and

fighting, 14%, as the top two incidents at AES. Fighting (32%) and disturbing class (14%) were the top two incidents at SES.

The gender identified for the majority of the incidents received was males, specifically, African American males for both campuses. During the fall of 2021-2022 school year, AES reported a total of 65 behavioral incidents across all student groups. At AES, African American males represented 78% (51) of all incidents followed by European American males with 8% (5). During the fall of 2021-2022 school year, SES reported a total of 101 behavioral incidents across all student groups. At SES, African American males represented 50% (51) of all incidents followed by African American females with 31% (31). Nevertheless, the campuses responded to the incidents differently. Equally, parent and principal conferences, 49%, were the approaches employed for addressing the incidents at AES. However, in-school suspension, 58%, and out-of-school suspension, 28%, were the approaches appropriated at SES. Table 3 depicts the data gathered via the district's discipline management system and conversations with principals.

Table 3

Campus Discipline: Incidents, Gender, Ethnicity, and Action Taken

Evidence Source	Key Learnings / Analysis AES	Key Learnings / Analysis SES
Campus discipline incidents	Other received the highest count, 35 incidents, with fighting being the second highest, 9 incidents.	Fighting received the highest count, 32 incidents, with disturbing the class being the second highest, 14 incidents.
Campus discipline incidents by gender and ethnicity	African American males, 78%; European American males, 8%; Latinx males, 6%; African American females, 5%; and European American females, 3% of the identified incidents (n = 65).	African American male, 50%; African American females, 31%; European American females, 9%; European American males, 7%; Latinx females, 2%; and Latinx males, 1% of the identified incidents (n = 101).
Campus actions taken	The top two actions assigned to the incidents are parent conference 49%, and principal conference, 49%.	The top two actions assigned to the incidents are in-school suspension, 58%, and out-of-school suspension, 28%.

Classroom Observations

Observations occurred in six classrooms and served as an element of triangulation for the research. Each observation transpired for 30 minutes and intended to perceive relevant behaviors or environmental conditions relevant to the study (Yin, 2014). The observations were non-participatory and allowed the researcher to be an outsider, which allowed data collection to ensue without direct involvement (Creswell, 2013). Some of the characteristics observed during the observations were incomplete or missing lesson objectives, majority of desks arranged in rows, teacher lecture as instructional methodology and students responding with low-level responses (i.e., yes, no), low level rigor (i.e., tasks were knowledge, comprehension, and minimal application of Bloom's Taxonomy) (see Appendix M), little to no student engagement with peers, and classroom aesthetics lacking in 67% of the classrooms. Additional findings included: incomplete or missing norms and expectations, non-existent system of praise, frequent periods of students off task due to low level task and/or time management, unacceptable language between students, and inconsistent management of unacceptable behaviors.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Through semi-structured interviewing, the study extracted insights on the phenomenon of the perceptions of the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL (Yin, 2014). Each environmental scan interview and end-user consultation interview lasted 40 minutes on average, transpired in English, and followed the Environmental Informant Consultation Protocol and End-user Consultation Empathy Interview Protocol (see Appendices A & G).

Environmental Scan Interviews. To learn what was occurring in neighboring school districts pertaining to SEL including understanding/meaning, professional development, teacher support, current implementation levels, the researcher conducted environmental scan interviews.

The diverse group of participants consisted of a superintendent, an assistant superintendent, principal, teacher, district support specialist, and state program advisor, who were between 30-70 years of age and 10-30+ years in education. Table 4 provides a description of the environmental scan interview participants.

Table 4

Demographic Data for Environmental Scan Interview Participants

Participant	Role	Education Level	Age Range	Race/Ethnicity	Years in Role	Years in Education	School Affiliation
Anthony	Superintendent Assistant	EdD	60-70	African American	14	30+	Elementary, Middle, High Schools
Grace	Superintendent	Master's	60-70	European American	10	20+	Elementary, Middle, High Schools
Andréa	Teacher State Program	Master's	50-60	African American	15	15	Elementary School
Denise	Supervisor District	Master's	40-50	African American	5	13	Elementary, Middle, High Schools
Danny	Specialist	EdS	40-50	African American	6	16	Elementary, Middle, High Schools
Wayne	Principal	Master's	30-40	Latinx	4	10	Middle School

Insights gleaned from the environmental scan interviews were the education communities in the area do not know what SEL is, districts have not received professional development in SEL, and districts have not received support in SEL. Wayne, a middle school principal, stated:

It would be nice if someone provided some clarity on exactly what SEL is and how the teachers are to use it in the classroom. My teachers are willing to do what is asked of them; however, they need guidance, and I am unable to guide them myself because I am not clear how the state is defining SEL.

All the environmental scan interviewees shared it would be important for the researcher to explain the purpose behind the research for the teachers to be willing to participate freely and not feel judged because they do not know what SEL is or anything about SEL learning practices that support SEL. Grace, the assistant superintendent, expressed:

As a result of this environmental scan interview, I am going to investigate what professional development is available for me to send some teachers to or to bring to the district because we are doing our students a disservice by not knowing ourselves how we can best serve our students. I have heard the SEL language in the past, but I did not fully understand until now.

It was evident Andréa and Denise had an idea about the meaning of SEL practices per their responses. Andréa alluded to how as a teacher, she is sensitive to her students' needs such as loss of loved one, illness, lack of nutrition and clothing, and creates partnerships with the parents. Denise stressed how all educators need to stay current with the social injustices occurring in the world (i.e., close to home and in other states, even countries) because knowing what is happening can help educators develop students' survival skills as they become adults. The comments from Anthony, who will retire in May, was clear he understood SEL, as he stated:

Building relationships is key and that is what I tell my staff all the time. It is no different with the teachers in the classroom with the students and the students' parents. I have made sure my staff received cultural sensitivity training and conflict resolution training, after they completed the cultural awareness training sessions. I did all of this because I have a background in counseling and special education; therefore, I knew what to do for my staff and my students. It was not because the state required it of me.

Throughout the interview process, Danny stated how important it was to be truthful and replied:

My district puts a lot of things in writing and it looks good on paper. But, in reality, they are just words. There is little follow through and constant revamping, or as some call it "tweaking" the directions of any program or curriculum purchased. I feel this happens because monitoring and/or accountability does not occur as it should. As you can see, I

am lacking in my own SEL development because I did not know what it was until you shared the diagram with me. In all honesty, I am going to see what I can find online and educate myself, because I can see why our students are not advancing academically. It is because we are failing them in the main areas of their social and emotional development. That explains why so many of the teachers have little to no patience with the students, and they are quick to blame the students for everything. Until we address that part, we are drifting in the middle of the ocean without an oar, a paddle, a tree limb, or a stick. I have a lot of work to do for myself and the staff/students I support.

Each environmental scan interview participant expressed the value they saw in participating in the research process. In addition, they shared this was the first time they engaged in an interview process that asked pointed, meaningful questions they could use to create personal goals for themselves and others they support and/or teach.

End-user Consultation Interviews. The six teachers who agreed to partner for the improvement of educational practices and their own self-development responded to each question. The experience of the teachers ranged from novice (i.e., first year teacher with no experience) teachers to veteran (i.e., 5+ years teaching experience) teachers, who were 22-60+ years of age. One African American female and one European American male were part of the research partnership, and the remaining four partners were European American females. Maintaining the confidentiality position, omission of the years in role, years in education, race/ethnicity, and age range categories occurred. Table 5 provides the remaining demographic data for the partners.

Table 5*Demographic Data for End-user Consultation Interview Partners*

Partner	Role	Education Level	School Affiliation
Adrian	Teacher	Bachelor's	Elementary School
Danny	Teacher	Bachelor's	Elementary School
Kris	Teacher	Bachelor's	Elementary School
Jamie	Teacher	Bachelor's	Elementary School
Sam	Teacher	Bachelor's	Elementary School
Terry	Teacher	Bachelor's	Elementary School

Each stakeholder agreed to meet at the date and time that was convenient. The interviews took place individually in the conference room at SES and in the counselor's office at AES. Interviews were, therefore, conducted within normal work hours during the fall of 2021. The researcher used the end-user consultation empathy interview protocol to guide the interview (Appendix G). All partners signed a consent form and agreed to have the interview audio taped and later transcribed; however, some manual transcription transpired during the interview as well. The interview consisted of multiple questions to gain an in-depth understanding of their perceptions on supporting students' social-emotional skills and their personal SEL development (Appendix G).

The perceptions voiced by the partners varied as to how they viewed SEL and supported their students' social-emotional skills. Danny shared, "I am always providing the students with the best educational experiences to help them learn and be successful." Terry stated, "Having an affectionate aura about me and the students finding it easy to talk to me, makes it easy for me to help them when they need my help." Likewise, Jamie responded, "Students learning we are a family, and that I love them as soon as they enter my classroom is important for them to know, and for them to know I am here for them regardless." Adrian answered, "Setting ground rules and telling them how it was going to be in the beginning, now we are behaving like a family in

the classroom because they trust me.” Sam replied, “I encourage students to go at a task the best way they know how and then supporting them from the point of demonstration is how I support my students’ social emotional skills.” Finally, Kris’s response was, “I make it a point to try to be there for the students because they have a lot of emotions going on and does not listen or respond well when redirected.” The research partners were able to articulate practices that influenced students’ academic skills (i.e., small group instruction, one-on-one learning sessions, after school tutoring, differentiating the assignments); however, they were unsure about practices that influence students’ social and emotional skills.

The final question generated some similar/mirrored responses from the research partners. When asked about their social, emotional competencies and what strategies they use when they have a strong reaction, elicited answers such as, “Oh I take a few seconds or minutes if needed and step away,” said Terry. Sam and Adrian replied, “Taking a deep breath and closing my eyes help me to calm down or regroup.” Kris, without delay, replied, “I try to ignore the trigger(s).” Jamie smiled and responded, “I lower my voice to calm the inner feeling of anxiousness.” Lastly, Danny stated, “I look at them, smile, and take a deep breath because I know they don’t know they are getting next to me.” Prior to ending the interview, the research partners had the opportunity to share any additional information they wanted to share about the school climate, etc. Comments such as, “We do not hear we are doing a great job,” “I do not feel valued or supported,” “Nothing happens to my students when I write them up or send them to the office,” “These children have limited opportunities in the community, so I do all I can to be there for them beyond academics,” “I have a hard time managing the students,” and “This has been one of the best years I’ve worked in this district.” Additional conversations transpire as the research partners approached the researcher in passing in the hallways or during school dismissal. This

behavior was evident that a rapport of trust, respect, transparency, and professionalism had taken shape because the researcher did not have any prior interactions or relationships with the research partners prior to the classroom observations and one-on-one end-user consultation empathy interviews.

AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey

The survey created by Yoder (2014a) provided the six research partners with an opportunity to interact with their current reality in a confidential manner with the understanding the data would assist in creating a plan of action to support their instructional efforts. Three of the research partners contacted the research and inquired about what appeared to be duplications (see Appendix B). After receiving clarification, the research partners had the completed survey ready for the researcher the following day. This was the first of the two encounters the research partners had with the American Institutes of Research Social Emotional Learning Self-Assessment Survey. The baseline results shown warmth and support had the highest mean, 90, for the instructional practices that support SEL, and the lowest arithmetic mean was 61 for responsibility and choice. However, cooperative learning had a baseline arithmetic mean of 77, but after triangulating the data points for Phase 1, cooperative learning instructional practice became the intervention. The discussion in this section was brief, as greater details appeared in Chapter 4.

Gathering historical, attitudinal, and behavioral evidence and artifacts was to corroborate the same phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The advantage of using multiple sources of evidence was to develop converging lines of inquiry and enhance the ability to find conclusions that were more convincing (Yin, 2014). Rossman and Rallis (2016) explain that using multiple sources also allows the reader to interpret and decide the applicability of the case learnings to another setting.

Data Analysis

The case study analysis guided by the theoretical proposition led to the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL (Yin, 2014). Rossman and Rallis (2016) presents a generic process for the analysis of data: organizing the data, becoming familiar with the data, generating themes, coding the data, interpreting, searching for alternative interpretations, and finally writing the report.

Organizing the Data

The researcher used several methods to keep data organized throughout the collection process. At the completion of each interview, after the partner departed, and before the next partner arrived, the researcher immediately recorded as many of the remaining field notes on the End-user Consultation Empathy Interview Protocol (see Appendix G). Additionally, the researcher typed and time-stamped the field notes with information about the place and date of the interview, assigned the partner a pseudonym, and filed the written information in a locked brief, as the audio recordings were on the password protected device.

Becoming Familiar With the Data

Daily, after returning from the field experience, the researcher completed any remaining field notes. Next, the researcher reviewed the notes from the day and cataloged the day's events. Finally, the researcher reviewed the recordings. During a second review of the recordings, the researcher carefully listened to the recordings while reading the original transcription. Throughout this phase of the listening process, the researcher would pause the recordings and edit any errors in the original transcriptions. By the completion of the editing process, the transcriptions were ready for a final review. Therefore, during the final review, the researcher

played the recordings and read the transcriptions to ensure accuracy of the research partners' comments.

Generating Categories and Themes

The researcher began by reading through the printed transcripts for each interview, after which engaging in a process of extracting significant statements that pertained to the research questions, and the formulation of implications. Next, sorting the expressed meanings into categories and themes using the literature review as a guideline occurred. The difference between categories and a theme is that the category provided direction for the gathering of data while the theme emerged as a sentence, word, or phrase that described the subtler and tacit processes (Rossman & Rallis, 2016).

Coding

Rossmann and Rallis (2016) state, "Coding is the formal representation of analytic thinking" (p. 245). This means the researcher devoted meticulous attention to the data and symbolically assigned summative, salient, or evocative attributes to the data (Saldaña, 2013).

Writing the Report

Writing up a case study does not require a particular format (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006), nor is it separate and apart from the analysis process (Rossmann & Rallis, 2016).

Nevertheless, the researcher chose a thematic presentation to report the findings.

Discussion

Through conversations with the environmental scan interview participants, end-user consultation empathy interviews with research partners, review of documents and conversations with principals, and field notes from the classroom observations, the root causes contributing to the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL emerged. The six root causes were social,

emotional learning, teacher disposition, accountability, lesson planning, disruptive student behaviors, and classroom setting. Elaboration of each root cause provided details that supported a “mind movie” that allowed an image to cycle repeatedly throughout the research process (Clark & Paivio, 1991; Paivio, 1990; Paivio, 2007). The mind movie kept the focus of the research on the problem of practice (i.e., the absence of teachers’ practices that support SEL).

Root Cause #1: Social, Emotional Learning

The first root cause contributing to the absence of teachers’ practices that support SEL was the absence of social, emotional learning. The students were not interacting with each other towards a learning goal in 83% of the classrooms observed, as the design was individual task in those environments. Researcher reported students learn more and retain the learning when they work/interact with their peers (Rabgay, 2018; van Ryzin et al., 2020; van Ryzin & Roseth, 2018; Yoder, 2014b). In addition to the lack of student interacting for learning purposes, the students did not use supportive language when they spoke to each other. At times, 66% of the teachers had to offer correction about the tone and/or word choice the students used when speaking to a peer. Per observations, the teachers and the students were unaware of the meaning of SEL, and the teachers were unfamiliar with the five core competencies of SEL.

Root Cause #2: Teacher Disposition

During the end-user consultation interviews, the sentiments shared regarding not feeling appreciated or valued were evident in how the teachers spoke and managed the classroom. Adhikari (2020) research found a correlation between how teachers’ lack of recognition triggers low morale. Furthermore, the teachers stating they felt inadequate connected with Adhikari’s (2020) research on low morale, as well as Mullai’s (2018) research on teacher stress. Mullai

(2018) found the impact of teachers feeling stressed as a result of their job, experienced difficulty performing their best, whether teaching and/or managing the classroom and student behaviors.

Root Cause #3: Accountability

Establishing expectations for the learning environment will position all stakeholders, including the teachers, for success (Myers et al., 2017). Therefore, upon entering the learning environment, the researcher looked for norms, lesson objectives, system(s) of praise/recognition. The norms/rules were not visible in 67% of the learning environments. In order for the students to know what to expect and be accountable for their decisions requires establishing norms/rules (Sueb et al., 2020). Sueb et al. (2020) suggests that having students create the norms worked best, as they were a part of the process and had to abide by what they created, not what the teacher created. It is important for the created norms to address respect for others and promoting peers' efforts, as those traits connect to developing prosocial behaviors (Velsor, 2009). Another element that contributed to the accountability root cause that links to the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL, was the absence of a system of praise. Students should receive recognition when they do well and giving the students behavior-specific praise allows the students to receive positive feedback (Markelz et al., 2019).

Root Cause #4: Lesson Planning

High-quality instruction tlearners receive from teachers is often a determining factor of the students' success, requiring intentional planning that includes rigor and meaningful connections and tasks (Althuwaybi, 2020; Roberts & Chapman, 2017; Sornson, 2015; Stipek & Chiatovich, 2017). As such, when lesson delivery includes the use of a structured instructional cycle, teachers provide content meaningful connections to the students' lives, and activities include timing expectation occurred during the observations increase the efficacy of the teaching

and learning process. Additionally, effective classroom environments that position students for learning requires the teachers to have all materials and strategies readily available, and a timer to assist with task management and accountability (Sahin-Taskin, 2017). Likewise, the observed lessons required the students to engage Bloom's low-level cognitive skills (i.e., remembering, understanding, and some application), which indicated the students were recalling and providing simple responses, both of which are low rigor tasks (Chandio et al., 2016). See Appendix M for the six Bloom's Taxonomy categories.

Root Cause #5: Disruptive Student Behaviors

Classroom observations validated the discipline data and end-user consultation interviews findings. Specifically, physical behaviors, such as fighting and pushing, are not the only behaviors interrupting the learning process (Lopes et al., 2017). In half (50%) of the classrooms, observance of students moving furniture, yelling across the room, ignoring/disrespecting the teacher, and/or moving about the classroom without a focused intent was commonplace. As reflected in SES's data, the students are missing direct classroom instruction frequently due to 58% of the discipline incidents receiving in-school suspension and 28% receiving out-of-school suspension as the consequence for their disruptive behaviors (Table 3).

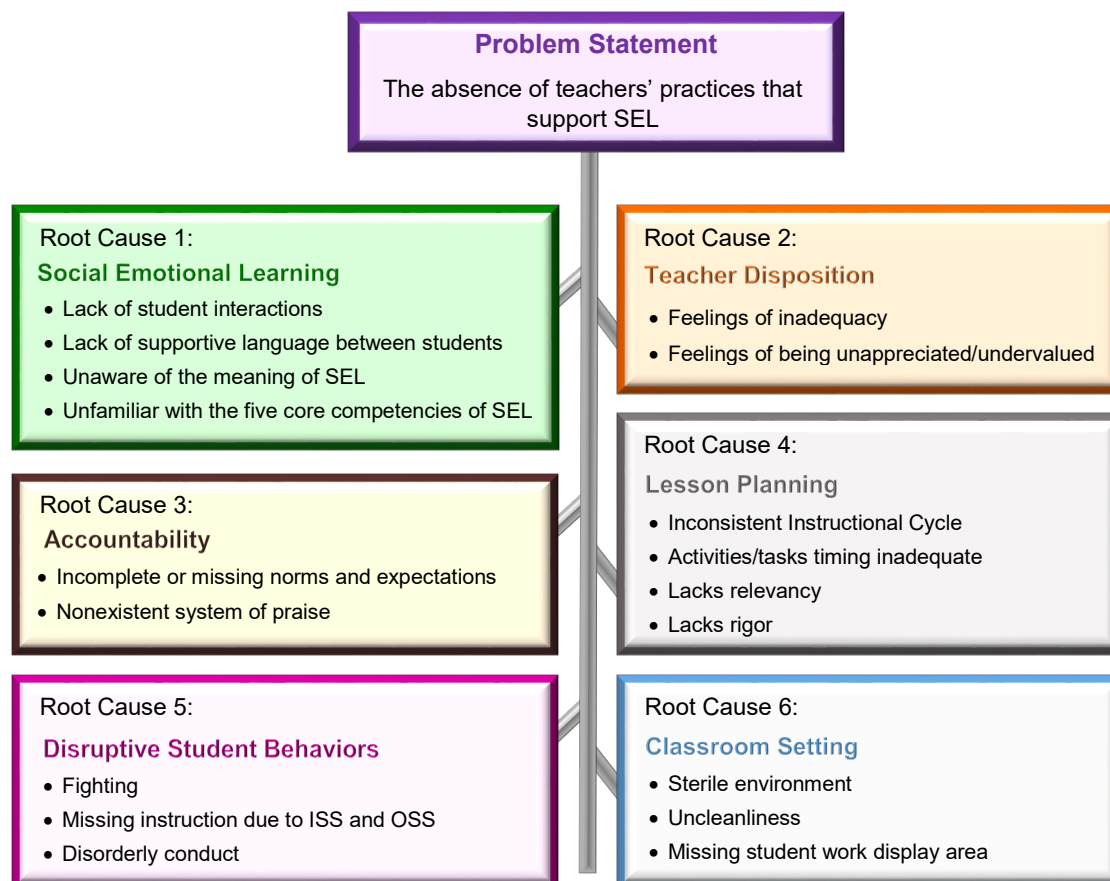
Root Cause #6: Classroom Setting

Three of the indicators of the National School Climate Center's 13 Dimensions of School Climate for physical surroundings are cleanliness, order, and the facilities appeal (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). During the initial classroom observations, 50% of the classroom environments lacked cleanliness. Furthermore, the learning environment was missing student work or learning resources posted on the walls. Posting student work fosters positive

classroom pride (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). Figure 1 provides visual representation of the casual analysis of Phase I.

Figure 1

Casual Analysis Fishbone



Findings

Phase I of this study aimed to understand the root causes that serve as generative mechanisms creating the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL. Upon further understanding of individual and structural drivers, it was determined that the potential impact of providing teachers with a professional learning session and personalized reflective practices to address and build capacity with the teachers' practices, couple support improved SEL

competence. The researcher theorized that the analysis could both validate the problem of practice and provide guidance for an intervention that is specific to the localized context. This section presents the findings for the instrumental case study that explored the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL. All sources contributed to a rich and in-depth understanding of the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL. The researcher was able to identify shared or contradictory values, visions, and conditions around the absence of teachers' practices that support SEL in the Mann School District, specifically, Alliance Elementary School and Sunrise Elementary School. The researcher discussed these narratives through main categories and themes and sub-themes that emerged. The final section of the chapter provided a summary of the findings.

Discussion

The researcher sought to gather a cross-section of perspectives and experiences from the Alliance Elementary School and Sunrise Elementary School research partners. Using the working theory of improvement, which included an intervention design plan (see Appendix N), and the literature review, this section presents a discussion on the findings, implications, recommendations, and areas for future research. In addition, several observations emerged from the analysis of the data collected during this research study.

Implications

Phase 1 of current research yielded implications concerning policy and practice. As mentioned in the statement of the problem, school districts need to explore and develop a culture around teachers' practices that support SEL.

Recommendations

After analyzing the data accumulated for the root cause analysis (Phase 1), three recommendations were relevant to the school district as district leaders explored addressing teachers' practices that support SEL.

Recommendation 1. Self-assessment and self-reflection. This recommendation involves tasks requiring the students to look at their work and assess at a deeper level where the students may need additional clarification, redirection, and challenge (Yoder, 2014a). Developing this practice will assist the students in evaluating their work, monitoring their progress, and setting learning goals (Andrade, 2019).

Recommendation 2. Academic press and expectations. This recommendation entails the teacher believing all students can and will be successful and presenting lessons to support and challenge the students to apply themselves and excel.

Recommendation 3. Cooperative learning. This recommendation requires students to work with each other through various strategies that create positive interdependence, elevate individual responsibility, promote others' successes, apply interpersonal and social skills, and develop group processing (Estaji, 2016; Wattanawongwan et al., 2021; Yoder, 2014b, 2014a).

Although the recommendations stated student or teacher, the recommendations applied to both the students and teachers, as they learned simultaneously. Further discussions about the suggestions occurred in more significant detail in Chapter 2.

Introduction to Research Methodology and Design

The theories of behavior change, namely a combination of the social environments and social cognitive theoretical frameworks, connected all elements of the research. The convergent

mixed methods intervention design (i.e., QUAN + QUAL) (see Figure 4) worked best for the problem of practice and research questions because the design allowed the numeric story to unfold. At the same time, the expressive verbal element validated the numeric story and provided critical information for the intervention, which linked the classroom observations, the reflective coaching practices, AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey, and follow-up process understanding interviews. This research design was complex because the researcher had the option to embed one of three mixed methods approaches to advance more precise findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Elucidation about the various mixed-methods approaches and when they occurred as the mixed-methods intervention design developed when Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) state:

The addition of the qualitative data to the quantitative experiment then embeds a core design—exploratory sequential (before), convergent (during), or explanatory sequential (after)—into the intervention. This is an example of implementing a complex design by adding a secondary method (i.e., qualitative) to a primary design (i.e., quantitative experiment). (p. 106)

The information from the end-user consultations (i.e., qualitative data) was essential because it revealed insight into the research partners' personal experiences, the inner workings of the setting (i.e., climate), and contributed to the personalized support that ensued as a result of the intervention (Bryk et al., 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; O'Leary, 2021). Speaking with the six teachers was necessary at the beginning of the research study and before the end of the data collection phase. All the steps mentioned above combined to tell the story succinctly with tightly woven numerical and descriptive data (Marmo 2020).

Research Questions

RQ1

- To what degree were teachers in this context consistently utilizing practices supportive of students' social-emotional development?

RQ2

- Did data reflect individualized professional learning and coaching a viable practice for schools and districts to use as support for teachers' increased practice?
 - What changed in teachers' instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes?

Research Partners

Kindergarten through Grade 12 students, teachers, and building leaders throughout the United States and the world is the target population. However, for the purpose of this investigation, six elementary teachers, who provided instruction to kindergarten through fifth-grade students, at Alliance Elementary School and Sunrise Elementary School, in the southern rural region of the United States, served as the sample. The sample group of teachers consisted of five females (i.e., one African-American and four European Americans) and one European American male. The research partners' age ranges were between 22-60+ years of age. The research partners lived within a 20-to-30-mile radius of their worksite. The teachers were unfamiliar with the researcher; therefore, a prior relationship was nonexistent.

Significance of Study

This research provided additional insight into the impact of relevant and effective professional development and meaningful reflective coaching practices on improving teachers' practices that support SEL. Moreover, utilizing the improvement science approach demonstrated

how effectively implementing quick, short intervention cycles benefitted the teachers' SEL and academic growth. Furthermore, this body of research contributed to the limited research available pertaining to research studies actualized in rural districts.

Summary

Students learning in a classroom where the teachers' practices that support SEL are absent contributes to the students leaving school without proper SEL development, which impacts the students' quality of life as adults (Espelage et al., 2018; Keefer et al., 2018; Rivera-Pérez et al., 2020; Sanchez-Gomez et al., 2021; Wisniewski & Foster, 2020). Therefore, it was critical for the root cause analysis phase of the improvement science approach (Phase 1) to determine and validate the problem appropriately. As a result of identifying the problem of practice, an aim statement emerged, which triggered drivers, change ideas, and an intervention design plan. Forward progression founded in two theoretical frameworks, social environments (cite) and social cognitive (cite), combined with the conceptual framework, the working theory of improvement, that followed the diagram of the convergent mixed methods (i.e., QUAN + QUAL) design (see Figure 4) established a clear plan for the intervention phase of the research to occur (Phase 2).

Definitions of Key Terms

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is a structured interaction between students, and sometimes teachers, that provides the students with opportunities to develop academically and social-emotionally. The social-emotional development is what ignites the academic growth. A plethora of cooperative learning strategies exists; however, this improvement science research study will introduce six.

End-User Consultation Empathy Interviews

End-user consultation empathy interviews are authentic dialogue sessions between the researcher and research partners. The purpose of the session is to allow the researcher an opportunity to learn from the research partner's perspective information that will aid the researcher in understanding what is transpiring and how to possibly proceed.

Environmental Scan Interviews

Environmental scan interviews are authentic dialogue sessions between the researcher and other individuals who are not affiliated with the research location; however, they may provide insight about the research topic. The overarching purpose of the session is to allow the researcher to learn what others individuals are currently doing or know about the research topic.

Improvement Science

Improvement science is a methodological approach that requires the participants to commit to investigating the perceived problem of practice to determine the accuracy of the perception, followed by creating an intervention plan that is grounded in research-based strategies, and implementing the intervention plan in rapid cycles to monitor effectiveness or lack thereof, which may require adjustments or abandonment of the intervention that may result

in the creation of a new intervention plan. The Plan, Do, Study, and Act cycle is the framework undergirding improvement science. Improvement science can be the springboard to assisting leaders in changing their current systems for the better, and does not only apply to the educational setting, as it originated in the industry arena (Bryk et al., 2017).

Professional Learning Sessions

Professional learning sessions are opportunities for the teachers to engage new content.

Can be synonymous with the term professional development.

Reflective Coaching Practice

Reflective coaching practice is a process that consists of the teacher and the coach/consultant having an open conversation about what occurred during the lesson/observation, support(s) needed, and next steps for future growth to continue. Also, the coach/consultant shares all written documentation with the teacher during the reflective dialogue.

Social and Emotional Learning

SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2020).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Student Lens

All students deserve a chance to have the opportunity to develop socially, emotionally, and academically (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016; Malkemes & Waters, 2017). Hence, implementing practices that support SEL including, student-centered discipline, teacher language, responsibility and climate, warmth and support, cooperative learning, classroom discussions, self-assessment and reflection, balanced instruction, academic press and expectations, competence building, are essential to creating a pathway for all children, and adults, to achieve the soundness mentioned above (i.e., social, emotional, and academic) (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Yoder, 2014b). Furthermore, using instructional practices and supporting strategies (e.g., jigsaw, peer teaching) affords the students with opportunities to express their learning in their language, share their thoughts while learning how to agree to disagree, develop the art of persuasion, support their peers when their comprehension strategies falter, and develop the skill of working well with others (Erbil & Kocabaş, 2018; Leasa & Corebima, 2017; Rabgay, 2018). In addition, when students engage each other and their teachers, they are sharing in the learning process, which begins the journey into the world of what is known as democratic learning, and implementing instructional practices that support SEL is the vehicle through which this critical learning occurs (Erbil & Kocabaş, 2018).

A grounded yet straightforward explanation for democratic learning is when the students and teachers have a shared respect and value for each other and learning, which flows into the community in which they live (Dewey, 1991; Erbil & Kocabaş, 2018). Furthermore, Erbil and Kocabas (2018) assert that through implementing instructional practices that support SEL, students' understanding and acceptance of others increases, resulting in better working

relationships and reductions incidences of discrimination. Rabgay (2018) adds that the foundation centering on the benefits of cooperative learning—one of the practices that support SEL—transpires when evidence of students’ interests, understanding, and overall satisfaction in learning increases. More significant was that the students’ attitudes increased from pre- to post-survey (Rabgay, 2018). Research supports the implementation of the instructional practices that support SEL when delivering the lessons and engaging the students as a step in the right direction for improvements in supporting the social-emotional needs of students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Greenberg et al., 2017; Kendziora & Yoder, 2016; Markowitz et al., 2018; Zins et al., 2007). When instructional practices that support SEL are present in the learning environment, regardless of the subject area, it produces a non-threatening classroom, increases social learning in context, creates opportunities for success for all the students, promotes rich discussions that result from student’s self-constructed knowledge, and increases retention of learning stored in memory (Rabgay, 2018; van Ryzin et al., 2020; van Ryzin & Roseth, 2018; Yoder, 2014b).

The instructional practices (e.g., cooperative learning, competence building) that support SEL have a high level of influence on students’ academic and social-emotional development (Roseth et al., 2008; van Ryzin et al., 2020; van Ryzin & Roseth, 2018; Yoder, 2014b). Specifically, Roseth et al.’s (2008) findings reveal that students’ achievement and peer relationships positively correlate with cooperative goal structures. Schools using cooperative learning experience peer relatedness at high levels, reduction in behavioral problems, and an improved school climate compared to schools providing instruction utilization of traditional teaching methodologies (van Ryzin & Roseth, 2018). Furthermore, there is a direct correlation to the lack of SEL development and emotional intelligence (EI) (Cherniss & Goleman, 2007).

Considering the distal influence of SEL supportive curriculum, students' future employers will use their EI information to hire and promote; consequently, if the students' SEL competencies are lacking as children and not developed by the time they leave high school, their quality of life will reflect the same, which becomes compounded by their health and other life circumstances (Espelage et al., 2018; Keefer et al., 2018; Rivera-Pérez et al., 2020; Sanchez-Gomez et al., 2021; Wisniewski & Foster, 2020). Therefore, teaching all children is essential in the education system. Moreover, van Ryzin et al.'s (2020) research discloses that the social and academic growth of students of color responded positively to cooperative learning and suggests utilizing cooperative learning as a means to close or eradicate the racial inequalities that currently exist.

Adult Lens

Teachers' learning and knowing what instructional practices support SEL and how to implement those practices in the classroom are two essential keys to students experiencing and receiving the most significant benefit from the instructional practices (Elias, 2019; Ferguson-Patrick, 2010; Yassin & Razak, 2018). Additionally, ensuring the students have the necessary foundation for discussion is vital; however, the critical step is to provide them with the structure needed to collaborate constructively, which equates to the teachers having the knowledge to structure and implement cooperative learning (Yassin & Razak, 2018). Therefore, it is important that teachers receive education and support in organizing and implementing instructional practices that support SEL in their learning environments if there is an expectation for the improvement of students' social, emotional, and academic achievement (Ferguson-Patrick, 2010). Nevertheless, after receiving the knowledge pertaining to the instructional strategies that support SEL, the key is to maintain consistent implementation, which is what makes the

difference for the students in their social, emotional, and academic lives (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020; Florian & Beaton, 2018; Sharma & Saarsar, 2018).

Teachers reported that they did not implement cooperative learning as prescribed, although they knew and understood the benefits to the students (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020). A deeper dive into the data revealed a correlation between the teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of cooperative learning and their level of implementation. For this reason, the recommendation is to support teachers in the beginning phase of implementing cooperative learning or any instructional practice that supports SEL that they have no experience in implementing (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020; Jones & Doolittle, 2017).

Another essential aspect needed to support consistent implementation of the instructional practices that support SEL is for the teachers to understand how SEL and instructional practices that support SEL work in unison (Summers, 2020; Weissberg, 2019). Having the knowledge that SEL consists of the five core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, is not enough, as the teachers require support for their SEL development and how to effectively implement cooperative learning (Ferguson-Patrick, 2010; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). There are multiple theoretical approaches about how to accomplish supporting teachers in their SEL development (Almerico, 2018; Duran, 2017; Girvan et al., 2016; Greenberg et al., 2017; Kendziora & Yoder, 2016; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Yoder, 2014b, 2014a). These approaches include learning by teaching, embedding support via policy, and requiring SEL courses during teacher education programs. Regardless of the approach, utilizing a tool for teachers to self-assess their current SEL development, followed by creating a plan to build on the results of the self-assessment, and incorporating the teaching practices that support SEL, is a logical

methodology for supporting teachers' SEL development while prioritizing the teachers' and students' SEL growth and understanding to develop simultaneously (Yoder, 2014a, 2014b). Teachers learning with the students is a practical and accomplishable task when embedding cooperative learning (i.e., one of the ten practices that support SEL) in the process (Duran, 2017; Girvan et al., 2016).

Working Theory of Improvement

Root Cause Analysis

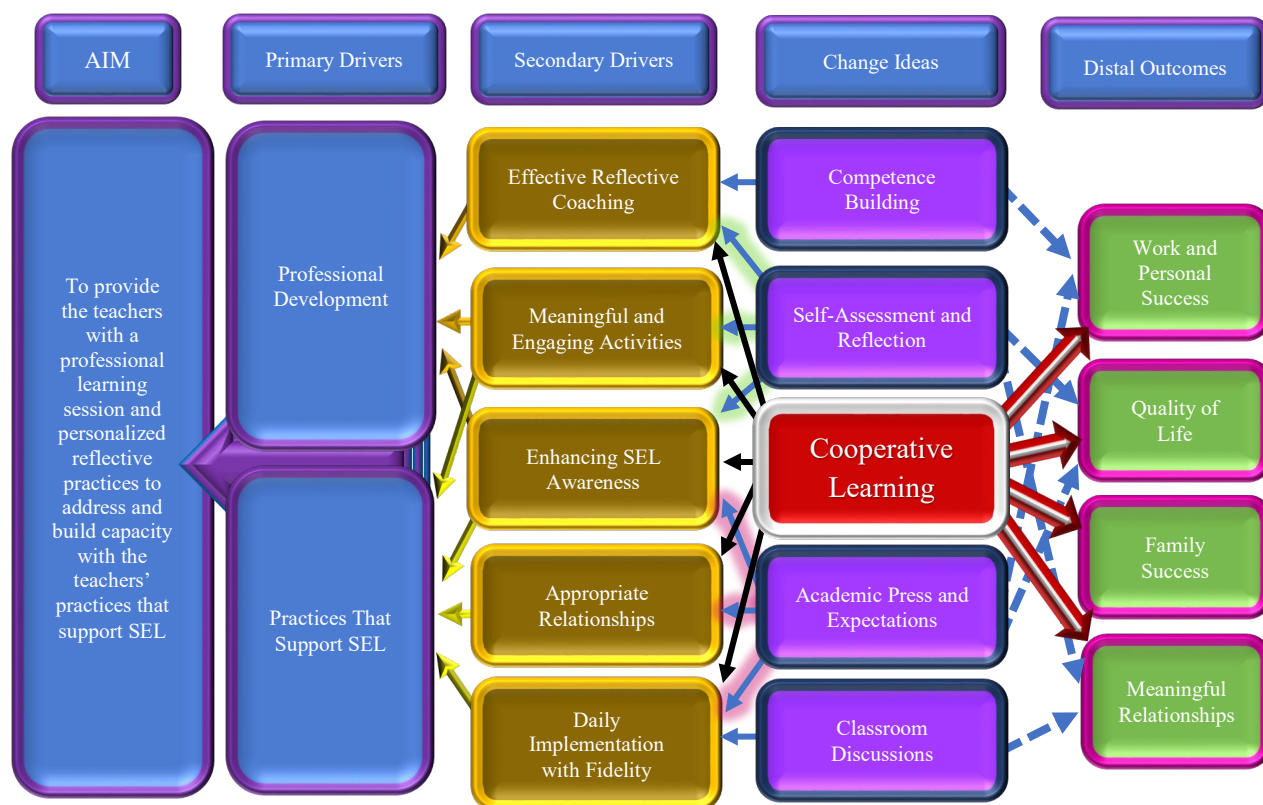
Achieving sustainable change for supporting teachers' practices that support SEL required the participants to enter the research study that applied the improvement science methodological approach with the mindset that the work was urgent, actionable, feasible, strategic, connected to specific practices, and forward-thinking (Bryk et al., 2015; Crow et al., 2019; Perry et al., 2020). Therefore, the six research partners, who the researcher viewed as equals/co-researchers, committed to keeping an open mind and doing the necessary work. The first encounter with the research partners, the classroom observations, followed by the end-user consultation empathy interviews provided valuable insight into their reality, specifically, an unawareness of SEL and the language associated with SEL; how they felt, namely, undervalued, unappreciated, and inadequate; and what was occurring in their learning environments, particularly, the students' disruptive behaviors (See Figure 1 and the end-user consultation interview section in Chapter 1 for additional explanations).

After learning of the language of the five core competencies (Oberle et al., 2016), the meaning of SEL and the CASEL definition for SEL (CASEL, 2020), and how SEL can benefit them as well as their students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Schonfeld et al., 2015; Yoder, 2014a; Yoder, 2014b), the research partners acknowledged they perceived the value of knowing

about SEL further. However, they were unsure how they would progress in their competence. The research partners received assurance and a reminder that they would receive the necessary support via the improvement science methodological approach that would support them step by step towards their SEL literacy journey. Therefore, the next step in the process was to provide the research partners with a formal professional learning session, PLS, on the five core competencies of SEL; 10 instructional practices that support SEL, with emphasis on cooperative learning; reflective coaching practice, RCP, in conjunction with the Reflective Coaching Note Protocol (Appendix I); and to help them become fluent in the driver diagram (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Driver Diagram



The research shows that when teachers receive professional development and apply the ten practices that support SEL, followed by ongoing support, they will experience more success,

especially in regards to implementation and SEL development (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020; Durlak, 2015; Yoder, 2014b). For this reason and in conjunction with the information learned from the root cause analysis through environmental scans, end-user consultation empathy interviews, classroom observations, and document review, the researcher developed a plan of action (i.e., driver diagram) that would inform and support the teachers' SEL development as well as benefit the students SEL development (see Figure 2). The two primary drivers, professional development and practices that support SEL, served as the main pivots from which all behaviors flowed. In order to actuate the primary drivers, effective reflective coaching served as the secondary driver for professional development, while appropriate relationships and daily implementation with fidelity served as the secondary drivers for practices that support SEL. In addition, meaningful and engaging activities and enhancing SEL awareness served as secondary drivers for both primary drivers (i.e., professional development and practices that support SEL). These drivers positioned the teachers to receive the necessary support for understanding what SEL was and how to provide instruction that supported their students' and their own SEL development. In addition to the driver diagram (see Figure 2), the teachers received an intervention design plan (see Appendix N) that included the intervention actions, person responsible for the actions, data collection, frequency of data collection, and time frame (O'Leary, 2020).

Change Ideas for Building SEL Capacity

Although other programs and approaches for building SEL capacity exist, the researcher focused on the ten instructional practices that support SEL (student-centered discipline, teacher language, responsibility and climate, warmth and support, cooperative learning, classroom discussions, self-assessment and reflection, balanced instruction, academic press and

expectations, and competence building) as possible change ideas (Yoder, 2014b, 2014a).

However, in responding to the information derived from the root cause analysis from Phase I of the study, the researcher determined that in this context it would be most effective to focus on three strategies that are positioned as change ideas. The first change idea, self-assessment and self-reflection, involves tasks requiring the students to look at their work and deeply assess where they may need additional clarification, redirection, and challenge (Yoder, 2014a). The second change idea, academic press and expectations, means the teacher believes all students can and will be successful and presents lessons to support and challenge the students to apply themselves and excel. The third change idea, cooperative learning, requires students to work with each other through various strategies that create positive interdependence, elevate individual responsibility, promote other's successes, apply interpersonal and social skills, and develop group processing (Estaji, 2016; Wattanawongwan et al., 2021; Yoder, 2014b, 2014a).

Furthermore, narrowing the focus on a few change ideas aligns with the concept of an improvement science inquiry (Bryk et al., 2015; Crow et al., 2019; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Perry et al., 2020). Moreover, implementing the change ideas with fidelity has the potential to yield proximal and distal outcomes for students, including future work and personal success, overall quality of life, family success, and meaningful relationships. Finally, teachers who provide a learning environment supportive of SEL may also experience increased personal and professional satisfaction (Cain & Carnellor, 2008; Jennings et al., 2013).

Self-Assessment and Reflection

When teachers talk with students consistently, the plethora of discussions offer the teacher a window into the students' thoughts and understanding as they dialogue throughout the learning process. In addition, discussion with students provides the teachers with valuable

information that informs how the teacher should proceed (Florian & Beaton, 2018). A strength of self-assessment and reflection is the behavior that occurs from the teachers' and students' viewpoints as they revisit, critique, discuss and plan the next steps for the learning process, which will aid both teachers and students in acquiring the best educational experience (Suganda et al., 2021; Yoder, 2014b). Furthermore, teachers express the feedback they receive from the students prompts them to improve in their lesson planning, lesson delivery, differentiation tasks, classroom arrangement, behavior protocols, and their social-emotional strengths and needs for themselves and their students (Braund & DeLuca, 2018; Sugishita & Dresser, 2019). Two noted SEL improvements from teachers placing emphasis on self-assessment and reflection are that students' communication patterns are different, as they speak kindlier to others now, and they develop more confidence in their abilities (Martinsone et al., 2020).

Academic Press and Expectations

Believing the students can and will succeed is the essence of academic press and expectations (Cannata et al., 2017; Yoder, 2014b). Lessons created with appropriate supports and scaffolds and delivered with sensitivity for all students' needs are indicators of academic press and expectation in action (Schmid, 2018; Sugishita & Dresser, 2019). When the teacher employs academic press and expectations in the classroom, the students receive lessons that are meaningful, relevant, and consist of explicit language that grants them access to learning in its entirety (Hattie, 2012). A critical component of the academic press and expectations change idea is the teachers knowing their students academically and personally, strengthening the teacher-student relationship and generating a better chance for SEL and academic growth (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Cooperative Learning - High Impact Strategy

Students engaging each other in conversations during class is a common occurrence in most learning environments; however, introducing cooperative learning into the equation produces a different focus for the conversations, as the dialogue becomes a meaningful task-driven discussion (Alrayah, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In order for the students to gain the most from cooperative learning and for cooperative learning to exhibit its strength, the teachers providing the students with the foundation necessary to hold a productive conversation is crucial (Hattie, 2012). In addition, having students interact with rotating partners and groups is an effective cooperative learning behavior that supports the students with adjusting to varying personalities, hearing and responding to different viewpoints, and managing change (Sharma & Saarsar, 2018). Additionally, cooperative learning provides the students with both individual and group accountability, which enables the students to demonstrate their individual growth as well as contribute to the development of their group (López-Mondéjar & Pastor, 2017; Sharma & Saarsar, 2018).

Although academic growth results from the implementation of cooperative learning, students reported they grew in the areas of empathy, assertiveness, and consensus, with the most valued being empathy, particularly “listening to the other person” (López-Mondéjar & Pastor, 2017, p. 434). More importantly, when students and teachers participate in cooperative learning structures, their brains are constantly processing as cooperative learning clears working memory; stores content in long-term memory; produces retrograde memory enhancement; creates episodic memories; creates novel stimuli, which in turn increases alertness; and activates many parts of the brain (i.e., Wernicke’s area, Broca’s area, temporal lobe, visual cortex, mirror neurons, prefrontal cortex) (Kagan, 2014). A brief explanation of six cooperative learning structures of

Numbered Head Together, Jigsaw, Think-Pair-Share or Think-Write-Pair-Share, Gallery Walk, Inside-Outside Circle, and Round Robin follows (Appendix O).

Numbered Heads Together. Students thrive and learn better when they are engaged and interact with their peers, and numbered heads together (NHT) is one approach that is effective in yielding positive learning gains as they experience openness and learn tolerance (Conderman et al., 2011; Leasa & Corebima, 2017; Lince, 2016; Wora et al., 2017). According to Leasa and Corebima (2017), when the students are open and learning tolerance, they are ascertaining critical skills necessary for them to glean from other views and endure unwavering differences. NHT requires the teacher to assign the students to teams/groups and a number (e.g., 1-4, sometimes up to 5).

Jigsaw. Nurturing students' interdependence and individual accountability occur when implementing the jigsaw cooperative learning strategy (Jainal & Shahrill, 2021). Jainal and Shahrill (2021) further articulate that interdependence emerges as the students depend on each other to build their learning, and as they strive to do their best to contribute to the learning process, they are engaging in individual accountability realm of the learning process. At the completion of the jigsaw strategy, the students receive "expert" classification pertaining to the content they learned and shared with their peers (Conderman et al., 2011). Likewise, the jigsaw strategy provides a safe space for prospective teachers to refine their verbal skills as they learn the pedagogical material (Halimah & Sukmayadi, 2019). Additional research reveals that students preferred cooperative learning using the jigsaw strategy, a student-centered approach, over traditional teacher-centered teaching methods such as lectures, watching films, taking daily/weekly quizzes (Karacop & Diken, 2017).

Think-Pair-Share or Think-Write-Pair-Share. This cooperative learning strategy is commonly known as T-P-S or T-W-P-S and is helpful in strengthening the learners' ability to engage in problem-solving, argument, analysis, compromising, and overall critical thinking skills (Kaddoura, 2013; Karge et al., 2011). T-P-S and T-W-P-S are quick strategies to implement and provides the students with a variety of scaffolds, changing discussion partners, and time to process, talk/write/share their responses with a peer before responding before the entire class (Conderman et al., 2011; Sharma & Saarsar, 2018). When using the T-W-P-S cooperative learning strategy, allow the students time to write a response before pairing and proceeding. During the entire process, the teacher is monitoring and listening to the conversations. If needed, redirection occurs.

Gallery Walk. Many cooperative learning strategies require the students to get up and move around (i.e., NHT, Jigsaw) and the gallery walk strategy will do the same with a twist. During the gallery walk strategy, the students are up, moving, and participating in the learning process by hearing, discussing, and adding to the thought process of their peers (de Pedro et al., 2016; Rodenbaugh, 2015; Stewart McCafferty & Beaudry, 2017). Beyond having the students up and moving during the learning process, Rodenbaugh (2015) adds that the process is fun. De Pedro et al. (2016) believe marginalized students benefit significantly from the use of gallery walks and encourage teachers to be creative when planning and to deliver lessons.

Inside-Outside Circle. Setting the stage for talking is essential in ensuring the students know how to engage each other during the conversation (Hadley et al., 2020; Hattie, 2012). In addition, implementing an inside-outside circle supports students' oral language development (i.e., speaking and listening skills) as their communication opportunities increase (Fitrianingsih & Sholihah, 2017; Wijaya & Sari, 2017). Also, Fitrianingsih and Sholihah (2017) convey

additional benefits from using the inside-outside circle are occasions for kinesthetic learners to blossom, various community-building tasks to materialize, and personalized differentiation to flourish. Similarly, students' writing skills, particularly narrative writing, increase because the students become motivated by hearing the thoughts of different peers, articulating their ideas and plans for writing before putting pen to paper, and receiving feedback from others (Mulyanah & Ishak, 2021).

Round Robin. An easy cooperative learning strategy to implement that grants every child's voice the space to speak and contribute to the learning process is the round-robin (Asari et al., 2017; T. Jones & Sterling, 2011). According to Jones and Sterling (2011), allowing the higher-level ability students to speak first will allow the lower-level ability students an opportunity to hear multiple responses before deciding how they would like to respond. Research shows students' positive support for each other, and their higher-order thinking skills ((*HOTS*, (i.e., analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing/creating)) improve when they engage in the round-robin cooperative learning strategy (Asari et al., 2017; Yusmanto et al., 2017). Additionally, Yusmanto et al. (2017) report the teachers' and students' use and response to the round-robin cooperative learning strategy improved from cycle 1 to cycle 3, a change from 72.22% to 92.38% for teachers, and 61.85% to 92.77% for students. Each cycle consisted of five meetings (Yusmanto et al., 2017).

Summary

The root cause analysis and the literature merged, resulting in a driver diagram that situated the research partners to become knowledgeable in SEL. The knowledge advanced from their exposure to the literature, active participation during the PLS, transparent engagement during the reflective coaching practice sessions, implementation of the cooperative learning

strategy, and the targeted practice from the ten instructional practices that support SEL. The research partners articulated that knowing how they would progress through the improvement science approach made the difference in their comfort level and receptivity to the reflecting coaching practice. During the research study process, Danny, one of the research partners, stated:

I am not just learning about SEL and how to implement SEL in my classroom, I am learning there are frameworks and a method behind how all this works together. I feel so empowered because I know things now that I know 85% or greater of my colleagues do not know. And, the thing about it is, I would not know what I am learning if I had not been a part of the research study. We need more of this because it helps all of us, my students and me.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Theory of Improvement

Using instructional practices and supporting strategies such as jigsaw and peer teaching positions students with opportunities to express their learning in their language; share their thoughts while learning how to agree to disagree; develop the art of persuasion; support their peers when their comprehension strategies falter; and develop the skill of working well with others (Erbil & Kocabaş, 2018; Leasa & Corebima, 2017; Rabgay, 2018). Therefore, this convergent mixed methods design aimed to build capacity with the teachers' practices that support SEL. Hence, for this improvement science research study, the instructional strategy selected as the high-impact strategy was cooperative learning. However, in order to position the research partners (six classroom teachers) for success, it was necessary to provide them with appropriate professional development, implementation support in the classroom, and side-by-side coaching throughout the implementation phase (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020; Durlak, 2015; Ferguson-Patrick, 2010; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Yoder, 2014b). The working theory of improvement's intervention design plan was the result of the root cause analysis and the literature review.

Reviewing the literature from the lens of the students and the teachers was critical because the chosen research design needed to match the problem of practice and the expected outcome (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Therefore, understanding the working theory of improvement constructs, which required rapid, dynamic, intervention cycles (Bryk et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2020), made selecting the convergent mixed methods design a viable choice.

Research Questions

RQ1

- To what degree were teachers in this context consistently utilizing practices supportive of students' social-emotional development?

RQ2

- Did data reflect individualized professional learning and coaching a viable practice for schools and districts to use as support for teachers' increased practice?
 - What changed in teachers' instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the teachers' practices that support SEL in their instructional process during the school day, which would affect the students' social, emotional, and academic development (Yoder, 2014b). Documentation supporting the benefits for students receiving instruction that required them to interact with their peers and teachers, think critically, and speak to each other did more than increase their academic abilities, it developed their social-emotional skills, as well (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Kendziora & Yoder, 2016; Malkemes & Waters, 2017). In addition, the research found a direct link to students' SEL development, health, and emotional intelligence (EI) (Espelage et al., 2018; Greenberg et al., 2017; Pérez et al., 2020). Therefore, based on the root cause analysis and validation of the problem of practice, the process of implementing rapid, robust intervention cycles with the teachers, the students would begin to develop their SEL skills as a result of the teachers using practices that support SEL during the instructional process. Accordingly, having the teachers

shift their lesson delivery approach required them to make behavioral adjustments (Brackett et al., 2015), and each research partner stated they were willing to make the necessary changes.

Theoretical Framework

The theories of behavior change, namely a combination of the social environments and social cognitive theoretical frameworks, aligned with the working theory of improvement for the intervention (Figure 3). Brackett et al. (2015) assert that social environments provide opportunities for developing prosocial and antisocial traits. Accordingly, students' attitudes about their environment, whether social or physical, shape how they respond cognitively (social cognitive theory). Mulroy and Austin (2005) emphasized that students, or any individual, must know about the structure and process that controls the organization(s) to behave or function as desired by the organization's tenets. The three concepts connected to the structure are stages of development, systems of exchange, and diversity, and the three concepts related to the process are power and leadership, conflict and change, and integrating mechanisms (Mulroy & Austin, 2005). However, Stankov et al. (2012) suggest that students are more responsive and perform better when choosing and selecting who they work with within the social environment. Ultimately, as a result of the plasticity in the brain and the repeated modeling of the expectations of the new social environment, the neuroscience connection will play a critical role in the process as the cultural changes evolve and become the new way of existence in the social environment (Kwon et al., 2021).

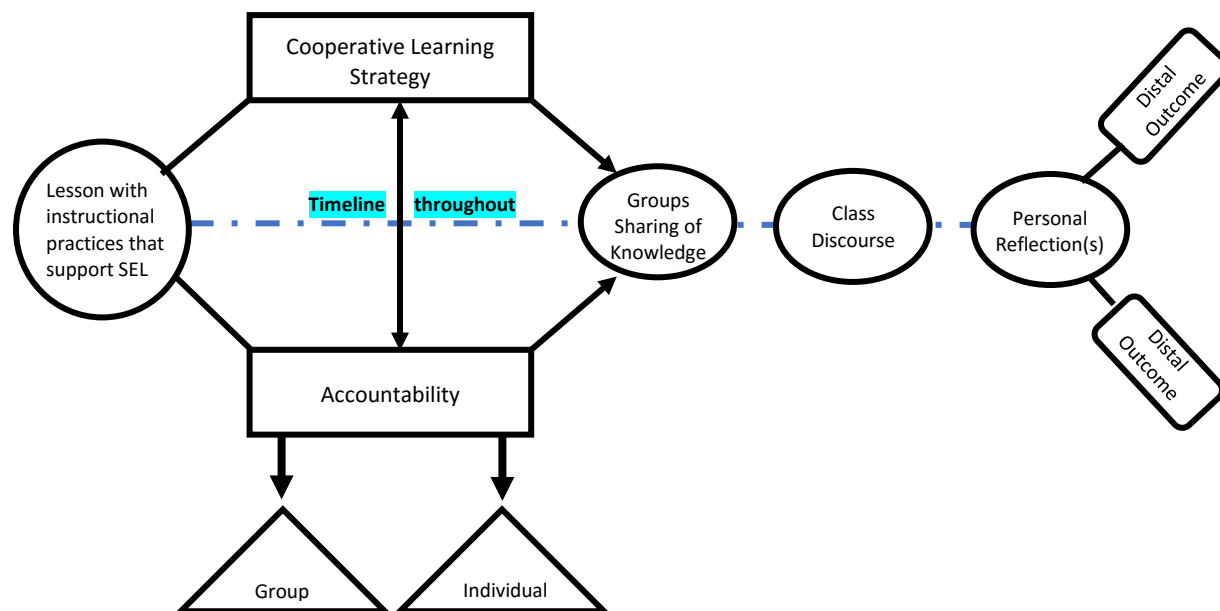
The social cognitive theory supports articulating and modeling expectations. Bandura (1989) confirmed students learn behaviors and morals through repeated observations. Regardless of who they observe (parents, siblings, peers, other adults). One fundamental factor contributing to how quickly the students learn behaviors and morals is motivation, such as seeing a value in

the expected outcome, as it is an ever-evolving influencer (Brackett et al., 2015; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Therefore, creating an environment that infuses reciprocal engagement as the norm positions the students for social cognitive change that moves beyond a personal level to one that centers around coexisting (Gross & Medina-DeVilliers, 2020). Thus, for the students to develop into individuals who know how to self-direct and make appropriate adjustments for the situation at hand, opportunities to practice—with adequate supports—must ensue, which will impact them individually and possibly influence social change worldwide (Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 2018).

As depicted in Figure 3, both social environment and social cognitive theories were active as the implanted intervention guided the flow of the interactions and expectations. It is important to note the timeline represented the timed element that existed throughout each lesson to foster the expectation of explicit focus, which aligned with both theories and the working theory of improvement intervention.

Figure 3

Behavior Change Theoretical Framework and Working Theory of Improvement Intervention

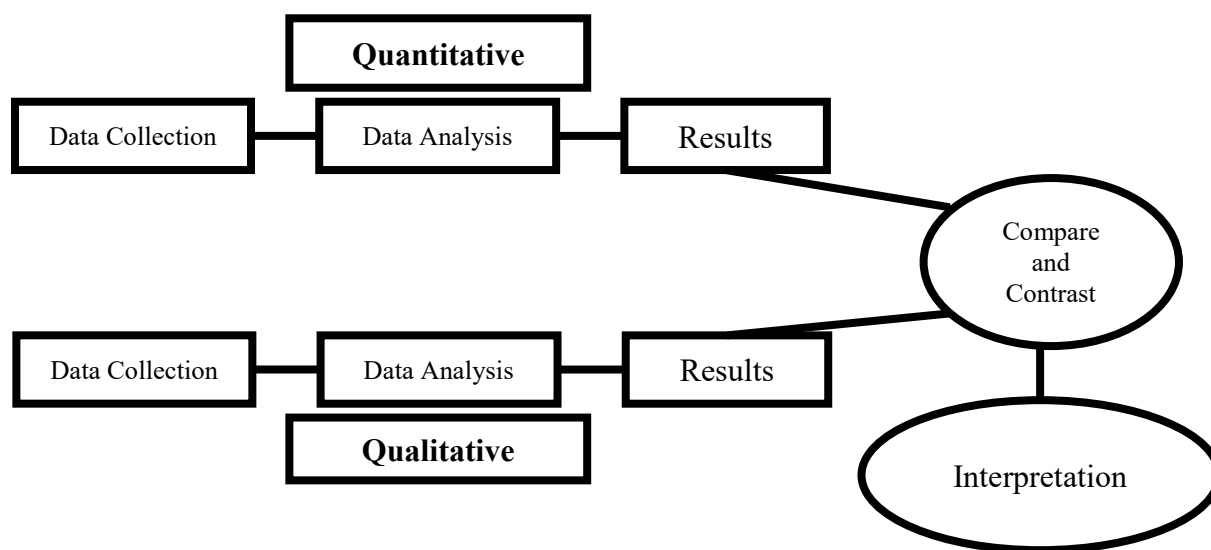


Research Design

The convergent mixed methods intervention design (QUAN + QUAL) (**Figure 4**) was an effective approach towards intervening on the problem of practice as defined by the research questions. The convergent mixed methods design allowed the numeric (quantitative) story to unfold. At the same time, the verbal (qualitative) expressive element validated the numeric story and provided critical information for the intervention (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In addition, the design seamlessly linked the classroom observations, the reflective coaching practices, AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey, and follow-up process understanding interviews. Data collected during the QUAN phase of the design was the American Institutes of Research (AIR) Self-Assessment for SEL Survey. During the data analysis phase, comparing the pre-and post-AIR Self-Assessment for SEL Survey and looking at growth along with the Levels of Use continuum occurred. Data collected during the QUAL phase of the design was classroom observations and self-reflective coaching notes. In addition, the researcher repeatedly monitored the growth along the continuum during the data analysis phase.

Figure 4

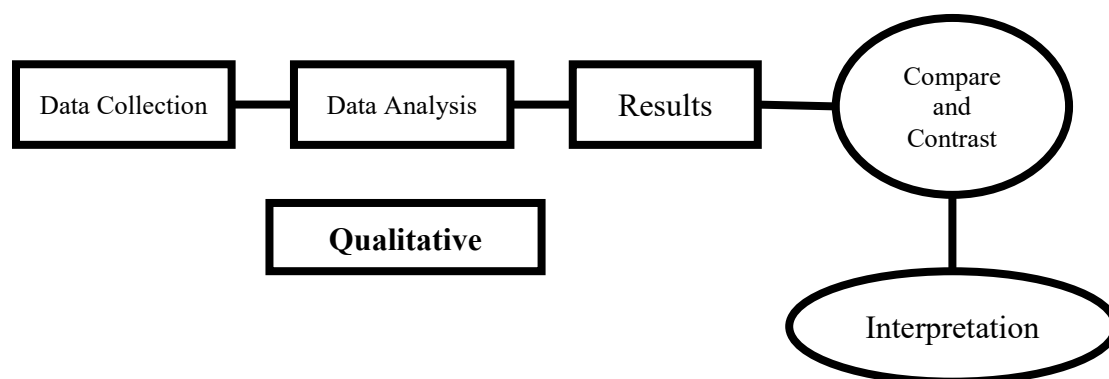
Convergent Mixed Methods Intervention Design



Consulting the six research partners was necessary at the beginning of the research study, and the same level of importance existed prior to the end of the data collection phase. Therefore, during the process understanding interviews, the qualitative research process was the methodology used for gathering the data, which produced verbal expressions (**Figure 5**) (Glesne, 2016; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). In addition, the process understanding interview protocol guided the interview process (Appendix J).

Figure 5

Qualitative Process Understanding Design



Research Site

The location for the research was in the southern region of the United States. The selected sites were two elementary schools, Alliance and Sunrise, in a small rural school district, Mann School District. The first site, Alliance Elementary School (ASE), served pre-kindergarten through second grade students. The student demographics were African American, 62.8%; Asian American, 0.0%; European American, 23.5%; Latinx, 12.7%; Native American, 0.5%; and Two or More Races, 0.5%. The second site, Sunrise Elementary School (SES), served third through sixth grade students. The student demographics were African American, 75.1%; Asian American, 0.3%; European American, 14.5%; Latinx, 9.8%; and Two or More Races, 0.3% (Table 1).

The average number of years of teaching experience supported the research of Gagnon and Mattingly (2015) pertaining to the difficulty rural school districts have in retaining teachers. The average number of years for teachers at AES was 8.80 and 12.03 years at SES; however, 7.69 was the average number of years for the district (Table 2). According to CSAI and WestEd (2016) and Voight et al. (2013), it was essential to know the quality of the educational team. At AES, the staff comprised 87.1% certified teachers, of whom 59% had a bachelor's degree and 22% had a master's degree. Similar status existed at SES, whose staff consisted of 85.7% certified teachers, of whom 53% had a bachelor's degree and 33% had a master's degree. Knowing this data factored into the school climate, which affected students' academic and social successes (CSAI & WestEd, 2016; Voight et al., 2013). In addition, Gialamas et al. (2020) and Mullen (2017) emphasized that knowledge of the educational team's quality data point contributes to future planning, expectations, and successes. Table 2 provides greater details about teacher quality for each campus and the district.

Research Partners

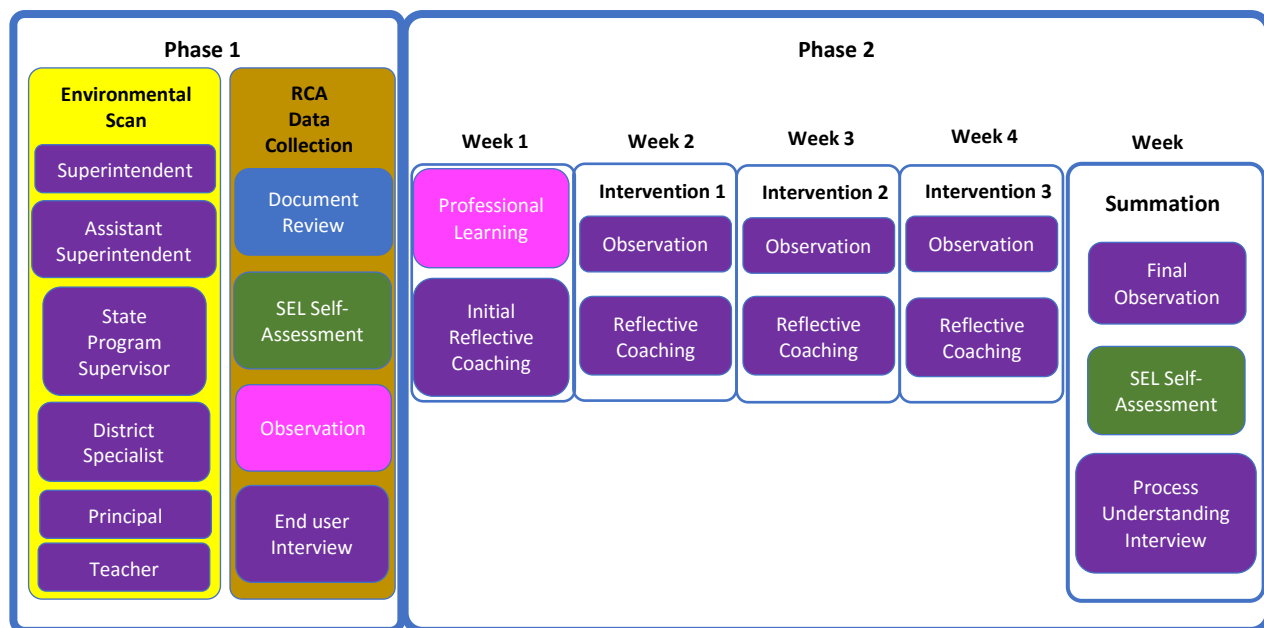
The research partners were six elementary teachers who provided instruction to kindergarten through fifth grade students at Alliance Elementary School and Sunrise Elementary School in the southern region of the United States. The genders and ethnicities of the research partners were five females (one African American and four European Americans) and one European American male. However, due to the confidentiality agreement between the district, the teachers, and the researcher, applying pseudonyms and omitting other identifiable data was the protocol. The research partners' ages ranged between 22-60+ years of age. See Table 5 for the remaining demographic data for the research partners. Additionally, the teachers were unfamiliar with the researcher; therefore, a prior relationship was nonexistent.

Study Procedures

The construct of this convergent mixed methods design required the study to unfold in two phases. Validating the perceived problem of practice was the focus of Phase 1 (Figure 6). Reviewing documents and talking with principals, observing classrooms, conducting interviews (i.e., environmental scans and end-user consultation empathy), and requesting research partners complete the AIR Self-Assessment SEL Survey transpired as part of the root cause analysis is how the problem of practice received validation. During Phase 2, the research partners participated in a professional learning session; implemented cooperative learning strategies, the high impact strategy throughout the instructional cycle; and engaged in reflective coaching practices, all of which made up the intervention phase of the research study. Completing a final observation, requesting research partners respond to the post- AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey, and conducting the process understanding interviews were the final behaviors of summation, which culminated in Phase 2, the intervention cycle (**Figure 6**).

Figure 6

Phase 1 and Phase 2 Foci



Document Review

Reviewed the parent-student handbook, the school counseling plan, and campus discipline incidents (Table 3) as part of the root cause analysis, which occurred during Phase 1.

Classroom Observations

The researcher observed six classrooms for 30 minutes each. The Classroom Observation Protocol guided the non-participant observation (Appendix F).

AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey

Yoder (2014) designed a tool to help teachers reflect on ten teaching practices that support social and emotional learning for students. The research partners completed the survey in the absence of the researcher (Appendix B).

Pre-Assessment. The research partners completed the pre-assessment survey during Phase 1 (Figure 6 and Appendix B).

Post-Assessment. The research partners completed the post-assessment survey during Phase 2 (Figure 6 and Appendix B).

Interviews

Three types of interviews happened during the research study. The first two, environmental scan and end-user consultation empathy interviews, informed the root cause analysis.

Environmental Scan Interviews. In order to learn what was occurring in neighboring school districts pertaining to SEL (i.e., understanding/meaning, professional development, teacher support, current implementations), the researcher conducted environmental scan interviews. The environmental scan interviews occurred during Phase 1 and transpired with a

diverse group of participants (Table 4). The Environmental Informant Interview Protocol guided the interview process (Appendix A).

End-user Consultation Empathy Interviews. The researcher interviewed each research partner to glean their perspective about the climate, beliefs, experiences, current practices, etc. Destroying the audio-recorded interviews followed the transcriptions of each session. Appendix G details the questions and protocol used during Phase 1.

Process Understanding Interviews. The final one-on-one interview with each research partner occurred during Phase 2 (Figure 6). During the interview, the researcher ascertained how the research partners processed the intervention phase, their current level of understanding, and transferability of knowledge learned. See Appendix J, a depiction of the protocol used during the process understanding interviews.

Professional Learning Session

Each research partner participated during a one-on-one professional learning session. Providing professional development in this manner allowed the research partners' identities to remain confidential amongst their peers. In addition, the researcher shared the individualized results from the AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey each research partner completed during Phase 1 (Figure 6 and Appendix B). The results from the survey, combined with other information from the root cause analysis and the literature review, molded the contents for the professional learning session. See Appendix H to view the format used to create the professional learning plan.

Reflective Coaching Practice

The research partner and the researcher engaged in a reflective coaching practice exchange following each observation. The dialogue was transparent, and the research partner had

access to the researcher's written documentation. The four domains addressed during the reflective coaching practice were objective, reflective, interpretive, and decision/next steps. The Reflective Coaching Note Protocol (Appendix I) directed the dialogue.

Data Collection Instruments/Measures

The researcher collected data utilizing five different methods to support and document teachers' practices that support SEL. Teacher choice, teacher implementation, teacher self-report, teacher response to learning, and teacher growth or regression were the five different areas of focus for data collection. In addition, the collected, cleaned, and analyzed data connected to the high impact strategy, cooperative learning, one of the instructional practices that support SEL (Yoder, 2014a, Yoder, 2014b).

Cooperative Learning

Erbil and Kocabas (2018) asserted that when students engaged with each other and their teachers, they shared in the learning process. Furthermore, when teachers used the instructional practices that support SEL during the instructional cycle throughout the day, both the students' and teachers' SEL development improved (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Greenberg et al., 2017; Kendziora & Yoder, 2016; Markowitz et al., 2018; Zins et al., 2007). However, SEL development is not the only benefit of the teachers implementing instructional practices that support SEL, as research corroborated the instructional practices that support SEL can factor at a high level and be the difference in students' academic and social-emotional development (Roseth et al., 2008; van Ryzin et al., 2020; van Ryzin & Roseth, 2018; Yoder, 2014b). Therefore, the data collection instruments aligned with building capacity with the cooperative learning strategy.

Classroom Observation Protocol

The researcher used this protocol (Appendix F) during Phase 2 while observing the classroom environment, which included observing the lesson delivery and tracking student and teacher interactions. The researcher shared the data with the research partner during the reflective coaching practice dialogue and assigned a rating of strategy use per the Level of Use Continuum (Appendix P). The information gathered using the classroom observation protocol functioned as a data set for teacher choice, teacher implementation, teacher response to learning, and teacher growth or regression angles for teachers' practices that support SEL.

AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey

The research partners completed the AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey (Appendix B) during Phase 1 and 2 (Figure 6). For each occurrence, the survey completion occurred in the absence of the researcher.

Pre-Assessment. The research partners completed the survey during Phase 1 and served as the baseline for the teachers' self-report angle for teachers' practices that support SEL.

Post-Assessment. The research partners completed the survey during Phase 2 and served as the comparison data for self-report and teacher growth or regression angles for teachers' practices that support SEL.

Exit Tickets

At the completion of the professional learning sessions, the research partners provided authentic statements of learning and feedback to the researcher (Appendix Q). The exit ticket completion occurred in Phase 2 and served the teacher response to learning angle for teachers' practices that support SEL.

Reflective Coaching Note Protocol

The transparent dialogue that transpired between the research partners and researcher provided data for the teacher choice, teacher implementation, teacher self-report, teacher response to learning, and teacher growth or regression angles for teachers' practices that support SEL. Collecting, cleaning, and analyzing the data happened each time the reflective coaching practice occurred.

Process Understanding Interview

The one-on-one interview with each research partner occurred during Phase 2 (Figure 6 and Appendix J) and provided data for all five angles viewed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Phase 1 and Phase 2 presented a plethora of data for analysis. Although some of the data collection methods (i.e., interviews, AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey, classroom observations) were the similar, diverse findings were revealed, often based on research methodology (i.e., qualitative or quantitative). Appropriately, this was the situation during the data analysis phase of the research because the research design was a convergent mixed methods design. The researcher deliberately mined each data point throughout each phase.

The data points in Phase 1 were the interviews (six environmental scans and six end-user consultations), six AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Surveys, six classroom observations, and three sources for document review (parent-student handbook, school counseling plan, and discipline management system). The interviews were semi-structured and followed the respective protocol for the purpose of the interviews (Environmental Informant Interview Protocol (Appendix A) and End-user consultation Empathy Interview Protocol (Appendix G)). The 12 interviewees (six environmental scans and six end-user consultations, who were the research partners) were

transparent and shared their thoughts without hesitation, as the researcher expressed the importance their responses would have on forming the next steps in the improvement science research process. Phase 2 data points were semi-structured process understanding interviews, six AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Surveys, 22 classroom observations, 22 reflective coaching practice sessions, and six exit tickets.

Quantitative data were analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics to understand the changes for each partner individually. In addition, a paired sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the interventions designed to increase the participants' use of practices that support SEL as well as social-emotional competence.

Integration

Qualitative and quantitative data were integrated at the individual partner level as well as at the aggregate interpretation level.

Analysis

The researcher used descriptive statistics to understand the changes for each partner individually and the aggregate when analyzing the quantitative data. Furthermore, the researcher conducted a paired sample t-test to evaluate the impact of the interventions designed to increase the participants' use of practices that support SEL as well as social-emotional competence. However, for the qualitative data analysis, the researcher employed cycles of reviewing the audio transcriptions and reconciling reflective coaching notes to monitor the trajectory of the intervention's effect on the research partners. Afterward, multiple cycles of coding transpired to process the research partners' expressive data and generate themes.

Integration

The integration of the qualitative and quantitative data at the individual partner level as well as at the aggregate interpretation level transpired to ascertain if the sum was more significant than the parts. Sorting and coding, weaving/merging, linking and comparing, creating next steps (iterative guiding), and counting were the integrative strategies used as the researcher interacted with data from the classroom observations, pre-and post-surveys, reflective coaching notes, and interviews. However, the researcher advanced the integration phase by linking the data through four approaches. The four approaches were connecting, all the research partners (sampling frame) data collection and analysis (baseline pre-assessment survey and end-user consultation empathy interviews) occurred simultaneously; building, by using the data results to inform the subsequent data collection; merging, by bringing the qualitative and quantitative data together for analyzing and comparing; and embedding, occurred when the researcher linked the multiple data points (classroom observations, interviews, reflective coaching notes, and pre-and post-assessments). Furthermore, the researcher used the weaving approach to create the narrative during the writing phase. Simply, the weaving approach merged the qualitative and quantitative findings via themes or concepts. In addition, the integration of the different data sources was instrumental in the conversation that occurred between the qualitative and quantitative data that confirmed each and showed a straightforward triangulation.

Maintaining a data filing system was vital for collecting, cleaning, analyzing, and categorizing the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Glesne, 2016; Martella et al., 2013; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). Therefore, the researcher chose to create a coding book that allowed an intimate data exchange (Glesne, 2016). Some of the data were descriptive, while others were mathematical expressions. Data entries occurred daily and were instrumental in recounting the

events that materialized during the improvement science research process. Due to the convergent mixed methods design and the desire to remain intimate with the data, the researcher utilized Excel and hand-coded the data during the analysis phase.

Trustworthiness & Credibility

Aiming to build capacity in the teachers' practices that support SEL required the researcher to consider the best path that honored the time and effort the research partners would dedicate to the improvement science research process. Accordingly, the decision to ensure triangulation occurred throughout the research was resolute (Glesne, 2016). Therefore, the researcher used multiple methods for data collection (interviews, surveys, observations, document review, and reflective coaching), multiple sources (six classroom teachers, who became the research partners, and six professionals in the education arena for environmental scan interviews), and two theoretical perspectives (social environment and social-cognitive) to substantiate triangulation (Glesne, 2016).

Ethical Assurance and Cultural Competence Considerations

Before beginning the research study, all required forms (informed consent, educator recruitment letter) and permissions (university and school district IRB) ensued. The superintendent, principals, executive director of curriculum, and research partners (six classroom teachers) knew the aim of the research design and the amount of time allocated for the improvement science research study. Furthermore, all participants received a copy of the information provided in the informed consent document, which included the participants' right to opt-out or discontinue participating in the study. Clear, explicit language ensured all participants understood neither punishment nor retaliation would occur if they chose to cease participating. Ethics, morals, and values were also a part of the conversation. As stated earlier, human subjects

were unidentifiable, as pseudonyms appeared throughout for each unit: the human subjects, the schools, and the school district.

Regarding cultural competence concerns, this research study respected all traditions, rituals, and beliefs of each individual involved in the study, regardless of their age, gender, socioeconomic status, racial demographics, and ethnicity.

Positionality

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for all students is the cornerstone of my reality. Believing that schools should be the vehicles through which students receive the opportunity to prepare themselves for their futures, whatever they may be, is a part of my belief system. Therefore, I am a person who approaches life and education from a theory of liberalism. Yes, I believe every individual deserves the same freedom to fulfill their dream regardless of gender, ethnicity, location, or religion.

As Putnam (2015) discusses, equality of opportunity for children of color, impoverished children, is situated on an uneven playing field. Agreeing with Putnam's position, exploring the impact that daily implementation of the SEL instructional practices could have on the learning environment while nurturing the whole child became a passionate endeavor that needed my attention. When taught through words and demonstrations, I firmly believe students gain a better understanding of how becoming acquainted with SEL can prepare them for life. It is my calling to connect with as many people as possible to perpetuate my meaning of social, emotional, and academic learning/leadership (S.E.A.L.). To me, S.E.A.L. is equipping individuals to become compassionate planners, logical thinkers, lovers of learning, and protectors of humanity.

Furthermore, utilizing the convergent mixed methods research design within the working theory

of improvement concept positions me to assist the research partners with building the capacity of their practices that support SEL. Building capacity is the goal of improvement science research.

Limitations

Under normal circumstances, the small sample size would be a concern or considered a weakness of the sampling; however, for the purpose of this case study, the size was not a weakness because it allowed the researcher to gather intricate in-depth knowledge from the research partners and make immediate adjustments as needed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Furthermore, all the participants met the criteria for the case study and the study population/sample was small (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In addition, time and generalizability would be potential limitations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). However, for the improvement science research, time could potentially move at a rapid pace (Bryk et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2020). Whereas, generalizability pertained to the site of the research study. Nonetheless, the research study showed traits of transferability. Also, understanding the concern about observer bias during direct observations prompted the researcher to use interviews and various documents to remove the concern (Martella et al., 2013).

Summary

Having validated the problem of practice, completed a literature review, formulated a working theory of improvement, and selected a research design to support the anticipated success of achieving the aim was the culminating reward behind this improvement science dissertation in practice (ISDiP). However, understanding how the working theory of improvement would progress mandated a clear explanation (Perry et al., 2020). Therefore, being explicit about the convergent mixed methods design provided the needed clarity. Furthermore, the positionality of the researcher revealed the overarching intent for this research study's impact on all students.

Chapter 4: Findings

The comprehensive overview of the convergent mixed methods design used during this study served as the foundation for sharing the process used to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data sources analyzed using descriptive statistics were surveys, classroom observations, and exit tickets. The qualitative data sources analyzed using coding (i.e., literal, focus, and themes) were interviews, reflective coaching notes, and exit tickets. The utilization of tables and figures (i.e., graphs) assists in unfolding the data story with the six research partners engaged in this research.

This chapter provides the outcomes of the improvement science research that paralleled action research and addressed the following research questions:

RQ1

- To what degree were teachers in this context consistently utilizing practices supportive of students' social-emotional development?

RQ2

- Did data reflect individualized professional learning and coaching a viable practice for schools and districts to use as support for teachers' increased practice?
 - What changed in teachers' instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes?

Sample

Six elementary teachers at Alliance Elementary School and Sunrise Elementary School in the southern region of the United States, who provide instruction to kindergarten through fifth-grade students, served as the sample for the purpose of this research. The sample group of teachers consisted of five females (one African American and four European Americans) and

one European American male. The age ranges of the research partners were between 22-65 years of age. See Table 5 for additional demographics pertaining to the research partners. The teachers were unfamiliar with the researcher; therefore, a prior relationship was nonexistent.

Data Collection

Teacher choice, teacher implementation, teacher self-report, teacher response to learning, and teacher growth or regression were the five perspectives the researcher considered while collecting data. Viewing data from the five perspectives provided pertinent information to support and document teachers' practices that support SEL. The collected, cleaned, and analyzed data connected to the high-impact strategy of cooperative learning—one of the instructional practices that support SEL (Yoder, 2014a, Yoder, 2014b).

Data and Analysis

Per the convergent mixed methods design of the study, the data and analysis findings unfold at times together and separate. This is determined based on the intent of the results discussed. The researcher uncovered multiple codes throughout the findings dependent on the data source.

Findings Related to Research Questions

Findings for Research Question One and Research Question Two

The six research partners actively participated for the duration of the research study. Throughout the improvement science research study, the six research partners asked questions, took notes, and planned lessons. In addition, the research partners used the content from the professional learning sessions and reflective coaching practice sessions to build capacity in their instructional practices that support the students' SEL development. In order to appropriately

respond to the research questions, data is presented for each research partner individually and in the aggregate.

Adrian

Adrian, an energetic research partner, was eager to perform the strategies correctly. Adrian always had questions ready for the researcher to answer during the interactions. In addition, Adrian provided explicit instructions to the students prior to modeling the expected behavior for the cooperative learning strategy used during the lesson. Although the researcher did not directly interact with the students, Adrian shared the students were glad to see the researcher each time she visited their classroom.

Adrian grew in nine of the ten instructional practices. However, Adrian showed reversion (-14%) in cooperative learning. Although at the surface level, this appeared negative, it was the result of Adrian's knowledge of cooperative learning and how to implement cooperative learning in the classroom. While reviewing the AIR Self-Assessment for SEL Survey data, Adrian stated, "I can see why I scored lower. I know what I am doing now and before participating in the research, I didn't know what I didn't know." Most noticeable were the growth in balanced instruction (37%) and responsibility and choice (35%). Adrian shared that the growth in balanced instruction resulted from planning to use cooperative learning strategies throughout the day to force closer attention to the planned lessons.

The partner data, SEL competency, disclosed Adrian had growth in all five core competencies. However, the top three that emerged as the most growth were self-awareness (23%), relationship skills (22%), and overall growth (13%). Furthermore, Adrian replied, "Since I have been doing the cooperative learning strategies with my students, my relationships with them have changed, and so has our classroom environment. It is calmer in here."

See Table 6 and 7 for Adrian's growth.

Table 6

Adrian's Instructional Practices

	Pre	Post	Diff
Student-Centered Discipline	80%	93%	13%
Teacher Language	93%	100%	7%
Responsibility and Choice	60%	95%	35%
Warmth and Support	100%	100%	0%
Cooperative Learning	94%	80%	-14%
Classroom Discussions	84%	100%	16%
Self-Reflection & Assessment	73%	90%	17%
Balanced Instruction	53%	90%	37%
Acad. Press and Expect.	68%	84%	16%
Competence Building	83%	93%	10%
Overall	79%	93%	14%

Table 7

Adrian's Social-Emotional Competencies

	Pre	Post	Diff
Self-Awareness	75%	98%	23%
Self-Management	94%	100%	6%
Social Awareness	94%	100%	6%
Relationship Skills	75%	97%	22%
Resp. Dec. Making	81%	91%	10%
Overall	84%	97%	13%

When responding to the second part of the second research question, “What changed in teachers’ instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes? Adrian’s response aligned with the teacher growth theme, which is one of the four themes (i.e., teacher growth, student growth, strategy use, and academic growth) generated from the process understanding interviews. Adrian said, “I feel a lot more confident now than I did at the beginning. I definitely still think there is stuff for me to learn, but as far as why it works with students, I can explain that to parents.” As the dialogue continued, Adrian’s next explanation aligned with the student growth theme. Adrian articulated:

It has given my students the ability to be in control of the learning. I think before I was worried about giving them a lot of (inaudible) because they struggled to stay on task but with the different activities I’ve tried, they really surprised me with taking responsibility and doing what they were supposed to do. And, I think they ‘re enjoying knowing they’re in control of how the lesson is going.

The third comment made by Adrian supported the strategy use theme. Adrian declared, “I’ve been doing it for just a few short weeks, maybe a month and it has made such a big difference

already.” In addition, Adrian’s final statement corroborated the academic growth theme. Adrian voiced, “My students’ test scores have improved. The small group rotations and working with their peers helped them.”

The data showed that Adrian understood the “why” behind their data and made the necessary adjustment(s) that impacted the student’s SEL development.

Danny

Danny was the research partner with a bubbly personality. During the first encounter, Danny welcomed the researcher with a huge smile. Even when Danny was ill, they gave their best. Danny said, “I missed one session, so I came in today because I knew you were coming and I didn’t want to miss my time with you.” Danny shared how glad they were that being a part of the research did not require adding anything extra to an already full curriculum.

Danny showed growth in seven of the ten instructional practices. Danny regressed in three areas, student-centered discipline (-7%); teacher language (-7%), and warmth and support (-9%). However, the growth Danny experienced signaled learning and change had occurred. How could this be? Danny’s response was logical. Danny shared that what they thought was student-centered discipline was actually punitive consequences issued to the students. In addition, Danny stated, “I focus on what I say, and how I say what I’m saying to the children more. I wasn’t mean or disrespectful before, but now I am intentional in what I say and how I say it.” Danny had 12% growth in classroom discussions, 10% growth in self-reflection and self-assessment, and 10% growth in balanced instruction. Danny grew in cooperative learning by 6%. Both the pre- and post- self-assessments reported the same percentages for responsibility and choice, 76%; academic press and expectation, 100%, competence building, 93%, and overall maintained an 88%. Furthermore, Danny informed the researcher that when completing the final

survey, the responses were more intentional and deliberate than before. The deliberate behavior Danny described transferred to the SEL competency portion of the survey, too.

Danny's partner data, SEL competency, revealed a different picture from the instructional practices that support SEL. Per the calculations, Danny experienced a -3% regression in the self-management/emotional regulation core competency. In contrast, Danny grew 16% in relationship skills, 12.5% in the responsible decision-making, and 7% overall. See Table 8 and 9 to view Danny's additional SEL status data results.

Table 8

Danny's Instructional Practices

	Pre	Post	Diff
Student-Centered Discipline	83%	70%	-13%
Teacher Language	87%	80%	-7%
Responsibility and Choice	76%	76%	0%
Warmth and Support	97%	86%	-11%
Cooperative Learning	94%	100%	6%
Classroom Discussions	84%	96%	12%
Self-Reflection & Assessment	80%	90%	10%
Balanced Instruction	83%	93%	10%
Acad. Press and Expect.	100%	100%	0%
Competence Building	93%	93%	0%
Overall	88%	88%	0%

Table 9

Danny's Social-Emotional Competencies

	Pre	Post	Diff
Self-Awareness	88%	93%	5%
Self-Management	84%	81%	-3%
Social Awareness	81%	88%	7%
Relationship Skills	78%	94%	16%
Resp. Dec. Making	75%	88%	13%
Overall	81%	89%	8%

When responding to the second part of the second research question, "What changed in teachers' instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes? Danny's response aligned with the teacher growth theme. Danny enunciated, "I realize that I don't need to be doing everything. Give the children the opportunity to communicate with each other and they can gain knowledge from each other." Danny's connection to the student growth theme occurred when Danny shared this information about a male student, Larry, who is always quiet and normally does not participate. Danny commented:

His question was a very good question and it was a detailed question asking for details from the book. I would have never known that he even recalled that information and he

spoke in a complete sentence. He was smiling the whole time and that really made me happy, because he's happy, he's excited.

Danny shared positive expressions about their students throughout the research.

The data indicated that Danny valued the personalized professional learning with reflective coaching practices and processed how their tone factored into the students' SEL development.

Jamie

Jamie was a conscientious research partner. Additionally, Jamie analyzed their thoughts consistently and preferred taking new concepts at a slower pace. However, Jamie was transparent in the initial meeting with the researcher about their concern of releasing some of the learning to the students. Also, Jamie shared their excitement about being a research partner.

Jamie's story is unique as the numbers do not tell the complete story. Furthermore, Jamie is a case for why the convergent mixed methods design is beneficial to implement when doing research. Nonetheless, Jamie's overall results showed a decrease, -3%, which is minor considering the self-reflection instructional practice regressed -20% and balanced instruction regressed -10%. During the data review, Jamie articulated how they began thinking about their own social-emotional health and what they needed to do to become better for their students. Therefore, Jamie shifted their thought process concerning how they needed to plan for lessons, which students needed to be together for certain subjects/content, and how to become okay with not controlling the learning.

Jamie's partner data, SEL competency, showed growth in four of the five core competencies. As the data conversation continued, Jamie discussed the impact that being a part of the research had on their life. Jamie stated, "My understanding about teaching is different

now. It is not my job to just talk and have them do an assignment, but it is my job to share information and allow them to explore with each other.” Jamie, like Adrian and Danny, shared that the knowledge gained during the PLS and reflective coaching practice sessions made them aware that what they were doing was not what they thought they were doing. Jamie voiced, “This is good information (i.e., instructional practices that support SEL and SEL core competencies) and colleges should expose us to this before we graduate as future educators.” Accordingly, Jamie’s second interaction with the survey yielded different results, based on Jamie’s new way of thinking about their role as an educator. However, responsible decision-making maintained the same results as the pre-assessment, 75%. See Table 10 and 11 for Jamie’s remaining results.

Table 10*Jamie’s Instructional Practices*

	Pre	Post	Diff
Student-Centered Discipline	75%	83%	8%
Teacher Language	73%	73%	0%
Responsibility and Choice	64%	68%	4%
Warmth and Support	89%	89%	0%
Cooperative Learning	77%	69%	-8%
Classroom Discussions	88%	84%	-4%
Self-Reflection & Assessment	60%	40%	-20%
Balanced Instruction	70%	60%	-10%
Acad. Press and Expect.	76%	80%	4%
Competence Building	73%	78%	5%
Overall	75%	72%	-3%

Table 11*Jamie’s Social-Emotional Competencies*

	Pre	Post	Diff
Self-Awareness	75%	85%	10%
Self-Management	75%	84%	9%
Social Awareness	75%	84%	9%
Relationship Skills	75%	81%	6%
Resp. Dec. Making	75%	75%	0%
Overall	75%	82%	7%

When responding to the second part of the second research question, “What changed in teachers’ instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes? Jamie’s response aligned with the teacher growth theme. Jamie shared:

I can tell them what it is, why it is beneficial, and I can see how the kids are growing. I can see the improvement it’s making, so I would be pretty confident telling them or explaining it to them, and why I use it.

Without hesitation, Jamie’s next comment aligned with the strategy use theme. Jamie verbalized:

I'm becoming more comfortable, and that's okay. You know, because it's a work in progress, because teaching is continually learning. You know we never stop.... I'm going to try to pull my hands back a little bit more because I need to give them that chance to prove themselves. And if they struggle, then I can step up and provide support. But I need to let them do more.

The data demonstrated Jamie internalized the learned content and simultaneously experienced SEL development with the students.

Kris

Kris was a quiet, reserved research partner. Kris was always punctual. During the initial meeting with the researcher, Kris communicated they wanted to learn all they could to assist them in the classroom with their students. Although Kris became ill with COVID-19 in the beginning of the research study, Kris did not waver upon their return to school.

Kris was ecstatic when the researcher reviewed their results because Kris's data correlated well with the partner data, SEL competency. Kris's findings revealed the cooperative learning instructional practice that support SEL grew by 28% and competence building grew 17%. Kris had one decline, -13%, in the student-centered discipline instructional practice strand. Kris conveyed the decline in the student-centered discipline instructional practice was due to their realizing their discipline approach was not student-centered. Therefore, Kris stated how they processed the post-assessment survey resulted in the score being lower than the pre-assessment survey. The remaining seven instructional practices showed growth, as well as Kris's overall percentage, a gain of 8%.

The SEL competency results revealed a 35% increase in relationship skills, 28% growth in responsible decision-making, and an overall growth of 20%. Kris was transparent that they

intentionally focused on improving relationship skills through the cooperative learning strategies, therefore influencing them to make better decisions. Kris further explained how the change in lesson-planning made them more aware of the personal areas where they needed improvement, leading to an increase in self-awareness. Kris showed growth in all five SEL core competencies and was eager to share the results with the colleague next door. See Table 12 and 13, the remaining results for Kris's data.

Table 12*Kris's Instructional Practices*

	Pre	Post	Diff
Student-Centered Discipline	68%	55%	-13%
Teacher Language	73%	80%	7%
Responsibility and Choice	48%	56%	8%
Warmth and Support	57%	63%	6%
Cooperative Learning	46%	74%	28%
Classroom Discussions	60%	64%	4%
Self-Reflection & Assessment	40%	50%	10%
Balanced Instruction	43%	53%	10%
Acad. Press and Expect.	52%	60%	8%
Competence Building	48%	65%	17%
Overall	54%	62%	8%

Table 13*Kris's Social-Emotional Competencies*

	Pre	Post	Diff
Self-Awareness	70%	83%	13%
Self-Management	63%	81%	18%
Social Awareness	63%	66%	3%
Relationship Skills	56%	91%	35%
Resp. Dec. Making	44%	72%	28%
Overall	59%	79%	20%

When responding to the second part of the second research question, “What changed in teachers’ instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes? Kris’s response aligned with the teacher growth theme. As such, Kris stated, “I can definitely explain the process and the expectations, and the principles of cooperative learning to another person.” As the data dialogue continued, Kris’s next statement connected to their initial concern about the student behavior and academic. The response aligned with the academic growth theme. Kris shared, “I am pleased with the quality of the work my students turn in. Their comprehension of the lessons is good, and they score well on the assessments.”

The data illustrated Kris’s purposeful planning, which assisted them in achieving their targeted goal of increasing relationship skills through cooperative learning.

Sam

Sam was a soft-spoken research partner. Sam was eager to learn and thrived on delivering the strategy with precision. Frequently, Sam would ask during the reflective coaching practice sessions, if the researcher saw any improvement from the previous lesson. Taking notes during the reflective coaching practice sessions was a normal occurrence.

Sam's data showed growth and maintenance across all 10 instructional practices that support SEL and the five core competencies of SEL. Sam had double-digit growth in five of the 10 instructional practices that support SEL. The gains were 22% in cooperative learning, 28% in classroom discussions, 13% in balanced instruction, 20% in academic press and expectation, and 20% in competence building. The overall growth for the instructional practices that support SEL increased by 12%. Sam credited the growth in their instructional practices that support SEL and the five core competencies of SEL to the level of engagement they had with the researcher. Looking at the SEL core competency data revealed the following double-digit growth in three of the five core competencies. Sam grew 18% in self-awareness, 25% in social awareness, and 13% in relationship skills, with 16% growth overall. Specifically, Sam stated, "The more socially aware I became, the more powerful the classroom discussions became because I knew what was going on outside the classroom and I knew how to pull that into the learning process." Sam added that their social awareness influenced relationship development because the level of comfort discussing certain topics with the students improved. Table 14 and 15 displays Sam's data sets.

Table 14*Sam's Instructional Practices*

	Pre	Post	Diff
Student-Centered Discipline	83%	85%	2%
Teacher Language	100%	100%	0%
Responsibility and Choice	68%	72%	4%
Warmth and Support	94%	100%	6%
Cooperative Learning	69%	91%	22%
Classroom Discussions	72%	100%	28%
Self-Reflection & Assessment	63%	65%	2%
Balanced Instruction	70%	83%	13%
Acad. Press and Expect.	80%	100%	20%
Competence Building	70%	90%	20%
Overall	77%	89%	12%

Table 15*Sam's Social-Emotional Competencies*

	Pre	Post	Diff
Self-Awareness	80%	98%	18%
Self-Management	91%	97%	6%
Social Awareness	75%	100%	25%
Relationship Skills	75%	88%	13%
Resp. Dec. Making	84%	88%	4%
Overall	81%	94%	13%

When responding to the second part of the second research question, “What changed in teachers’ instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes? Sam’s response aligned with the teacher growth theme. Sam shared, “I would feel decently comfortable to explain that because I do it every day. We’re working collaboratively, they’re working together, learning together.” Before the researcher could pose another question, Sam expressed:

My students are able to work together in at least two groups throughout the day and just from the start of the school year I’ve seen a change in them being able to work more collaboratively. When we first started putting them in a group, it was like just asking them to fight. And now, they can get together and work together with almost anybody in the room. So that alone is gains!

Sam’s statement corroborated the student growth theme.

The data supports Sam’s desire to deliver the learned content with accuracy and quality factored into the results they accomplished.

Terry

Terry was an energetic research partner. The students received hugs throughout the day in Terry’s classroom. Terry taught the students how to signal for restroom, water, and “calm down”

breaks without interrupting the learning process. Terry was a teacher, who other teachers came to for assistance.

Terry embraced the cooperative learning strategies right away and Terry's data reflected similar results to the majority of the research partners. Nine areas addressed on the 10 instructional practices that support SEL showed growth and one maintained at 100%, warmth and support. Seven of the remaining nine had double-digits gains, with the lowest being competence building, 10%, and the highest being 33%, teacher language. The partner data set, SEL competency, disclosed growth across all five core competencies. The lowest growth percentage was 9%, which was responsible decision-making, and the highest growth percentage was 25%, relationship skills.

Terry had a unique story as well. Many of Terry's students exhibited signs of hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder, therefore changing groups, moving around, talking with others, and creating projects were the aspects of cooperative learning Terry liked the best. Terry shared due to their diagnosis, that this teaching style was a perfect fit. Terry communicated that allowing the students to have more choice or to share in the decision-making process reduced the behavior problems in the classroom. Table 16 and 17 illustrates Terry's data.

Table 16

Terry's Instructional Practices

	Pre	Post	Diff
Student-Centered Discipline	70%	88%	18%
Teacher Language	60%	93%	33%
Responsibility and Choice	52%	76%	24%
Warmth and Support	100%	100%	0%
Cooperative Learning	80%	100%	20%
Classroom Discussions	60%	96%	36%
Self-Reflection & Assessment	63%	65%	2%
Balanced Instruction	57%	73%	16%
Acad. Press and Expect.	76%	80%	4%
Competence Building	88%	98%	10%
Overall	71%	87%	16%

Table 17

Terry's Social-Emotional Competencies

	Pre	Post	Diff
Self-Awareness	75%	88%	13%
Self-Management	84%	94%	10%
Social Awareness	75%	97%	22%
Relationship Skills	75%	100%	25%
Resp. Dec. Making	75%	84%	9%
Overall	77%	93%	16%

When responding to the second part of the second research question, “What changed in teachers’ instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes? Terry’s response aligned with the teacher growth theme. Terry voiced, “I am pretty comfortable in explaining the SEL strategies I am using because I see the benefits of it just in my students’ behaviors and their growth” As the conversation continued, Terry voiced:

The fact that my students are communicating with one another and are realizing that everybody has different opinions or maybe a different way of doing the problem or work. Also, they get to communicate and work together to figure out the best and that takes a lot of cooperation. That alone is a huge step for our children.

This comment by Terry supported the student growth theme.

The data reflects Terry and their students thrived in the cooperative learning classroom.

Aggregate

Findings for Research Question One

To what degree were teachers in this context consistently utilizing practices supportive of students’ social-emotional development? The six research partners created lessons that embedded the instructional practice of cooperative learning, discussed during the professional learning sessions at Alliance Elementary School and at Sunrise Elementary School. Therefore, during the classroom observations, the researcher used the Classroom Observation Protocol (Appendix F) to monitor and record the teachers’ utilization of the strategies discussed. The data reflects that the teachers utilized six of the seven presented cooperative learning strategies (Think-Pair-Share, Think-Write-Pair-Share, Gallery Walk, Numbered Heads Together, Inside-Outside Circle, and Round Robin) consistently (Table 18). The jigsaw strategy was the cooperative learning strategy not used. Conversations with the research partners revealed they

thought the concept was challenging for their young students.

Table 18 details the frequency each research partner selected and utilized one of the seven cooperative learning strategies. Additional analysis found the research partners used the Think-Pair-Share strategy 58% of the time, followed by Think-Write-Pair-Share 15% of the time. The bottom of Table 18 shows the percentage of frequency of utilization for all the remaining strategies.

Table 18

Cooperative Learning Strategies Frequency of Use by Partner

	Think-Pair-Share	Think-Write-Pair-Share	Gallery Walk	Numbered Heads Together	Jigsaw	Inside-Outside Circle	Round Robin	Total
Adrian	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	5
Danny	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	4
Jamie	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	4
Kris	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	5
Sam	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Terry	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total	15	4	2	2	0	1	2	26
	57.69%	15.38%	7.69%	7.69%	0.00%	3.85%	7.69%	100%

Having the frequency of the strategy use recorded was not sufficient because it was important to verify the quality of strategy implementation (Durlak, 2015). Therefore, the researcher monitored how well the teachers planned for using and implementing the cooperative learning strategy. This particular form of documentation placed the teachers on a continuum that tracked their level of use with the strategies (Appendix P). The continuum ranged from non-use, with a rating of 0, to renewal, with a rating of 6, and is based on the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hord et al., 1987). During each classroom observation, rating the level of use was a part of the observation and support process. Movement on the continuum relied on the individual and how they responded to the personalized learning sessions with reflective coaching

practice. Although a timer does not indicate how soon someone should move on the continuum, the research partners moved relatively quickly on the continuum (Hall & Hord, 2015). For example, they moved from non-use (0) to mechanical (1) in one session. This movement occurred because the research partners had a planning session with the researcher during the personalized professional learning session. Therefore, the preparation 1a and 1b stages occurred prior to the first observation following the introduction of the intervention. In addition, moving from routine (3) to refined (4) required the research partners to implement multiple cooperative learning strategies daily with ease (Appendix P). Table 19 details the level of use observed during each observation period, including the initial observation (Time 1) that occurred during Phase 1, which established the baseline prior to the beginning of the intervention phase (Times 2-5), Phase 2.

Table 19

Strategy Level Use Over Time

	Observations				
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 5
Adrian	0	2	2	3	3
Danny	0	2	-	3	3
Jamie	0	2	2	3	3
Kris	0	2	3	3	2
Sam	0	2	3	3	3
Terry	0	2	3	3	3

Note. Based on Concerns-Based Adoption Model, CBAM (Hord et al., 1987).

Further analysis of the levels of use data reflected that three of the six teachers achieved a routine rating by the second observation and maintained the rating for the remainder of the research study. In addition, two more research partners joined the routine rating and remained at the rating for the duration of the research study by the third observation. However, one research partner regressed from routine to mechanical by the final observation. At the surface level, this

may appear to be undesirable; however, there was an explanation for the lower rating. The teacher attempted to implement a different cooperative learning strategy; therefore, returning to mechanical is a normal and expected occurrence (George et al., 2006).

In response to question one, data confirms the research partners consistently utilized practices supportive of students' social-emotional development to a high degree.

Findings for Research Question Two

Did data reflect individualized professional learning and coaching a viable practice for schools and districts to use as support for teachers' increased practice? What changed in teachers' instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes?

The research partners were astonished at the results for the second research question. First, due to contextual factors caused by the global pandemic of COVID-19, five of the six research partners attended the professional learning session that included videos, one-on-one time for questions, and strategy demonstrations and explanations. However, when the teacher who missed due to illness returned, the researcher provided a modified professional learning session with the teacher. During the professional learning session, the research partners received an exit ticket to complete before departing the area. The results yielded both quantitative and qualitative data. In the quantitative realm, four of the five research partners responded they understood the content of the session and marked a rating of 10 on a scale of 1-10. One research partner gave a rating of 9.

Receiving the quantitative data was helpful, however the critical piece to the professional learning session was receiving the expressive feedback (Al-Bashir et al., 2016). The feedback contributed to the next steps during the personalized reflective coaching sessions that immediately commenced. A literal coding approach resulted in two themes each with two sub-

categories (Saldaña, 2013).

Another data point used to respond to the second research question was the information gathered during the reflective coaching practice sessions. During the practice sessions, the research partners and researcher discussed the lesson and classroom observation notes. The research partners always had access to the researcher's notes, comments, and drawings, which depicted what transpired during the observation period. The reflective coaching practice sessions operated according to the Reflective Coaching Notes Protocol (Appendix I), which had four domains including objective overview of the lesson, reflection on details, collaborative interpretation, and decisional next steps. The dialogue between the research partners and the researcher produced thick descriptive data because this is where clarifications, "I wonder" statements, questions, and modeling, materialized. However, this time during the coding process, the researcher used a second cycle due to the volume of data. Themes surfaced for the four domains and ranged from student behaviors to share knowledge and teach peers (**Table 20**).

Table 20

Reflective Coaching Practice Sessions

Domain	Themes
Objective	Student behaviors Engaging tasks Learning environment
Reflective	Authentic relationships Benefit for learning challenged students Student control
Interpretive	Providing more choices to demonstrate learning Feels like teaching and learning Quick thinking and adjusting
Decisional/Next Steps	Strategy exploration Social awareness connections Maintain support Share knowledge / Teach peers

The research partners expressed their gratitude for having the reflective coaching practices and stated they looked forward to each week's dialogue and work session, the title they adopted for the reflective coaching practice sessions. The first part of the second question received confirmation that individualized professional learning and coaching are viable practices for schools and districts to utilize as support for teachers increased practice which leads to increased student cooperative learning. A strong response and validation for the second element of the second research question, "What changed in teachers' instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes?" followed the confirmation. The data for this portion of the question unfolded as a whole group. This distinction occurred because the researcher wanted to ensure each individual research partner's capacity was increasing and the best way to achieve this task was to look at each research partner individually as well. The American Institutes of Research Self-Assessment of SEL Survey (Appendix B) and the Process Understanding Interview Protocol (Appendix J) were the data points used.

The group data for the pre- and post- self-assessment held constant with warmth and support, which was evident throughout the research study. The research partners began with a secure understanding of what warmth and support meant. However, one research partner regressed. A brief discussion explaining why it is located with the individual's data set. A close look at the data side-by-side allowed a more precise depiction to appear. Growth transpired across all 10 instructional practices, with classroom discussion having a 15% gain, followed by responsibility and choice with a 13% gain, and balanced instruction having a 12% gain. Looking at the partner data, the SEL competency for the group, they had a 20% gain in relationship skills, a 14% gain in self-awareness, and a 12% gain in social awareness.

See Table 21 and 22 for all 10 instructional practices that support SEL and the five core competencies of SEL.

Table 21*Aggregate Instructional Practices*

	Pre	Post	Diff
Student-Centered Discipline	77%	79%	2%
Teacher Language	81%	88%	7%
Responsibility and Choice	61%	74%	13%
Warmth and Support	90%	90%	0%
Cooperative Learning	77%	86%	9%
Classroom Discussions	75%	90%	15%
Self-Reflection & Assessment	63%	67%	4%
Balanced Instruction	63%	75%	12%
Acad. Press and Expect.	75%	84%	9%
Competence Building	76%	86%	10%
Overall	74%	82%	8%

Table 22*Aggregate Social-Emotional Competencies*

	Pre	Post	Diff
Self-Awareness	77%	91%	14%
Self-Management	82%	90%	8%
Social Awareness	77%	89%	12%
Relationship Skills	72%	92%	20%
Resp. Dec. Making	72%	83%	11%
Overall	76%	89%	13%

The paired sample *t*-test between pre- and post-test examined levels of growth based on the American Institute of Research Self-Assessment of SEL Survey (Yoder, 2014a). The results show a significant difference from the beginning to the end ($t(5)=-1.70, p < .05, df=5$). See Table 23 for the descriptive statistics for the SEL competency.

Table 23*Results of Paired Sample t-tests Between Pre-Test and Post-Test for SEL Competency*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre Self-Awareness	76.33	6.34	2.59	3.47	5	0.02
Post-Self-Awareness	62.92	13.55	5.53			
Pre Self-Management	80.93	14.87	6.07	2.67	5	0.04
Post Self-Management	62.60	14.41	5.88			
Pre Social Awareness	61.33	10.33	4.22	-4.13	5	0.01
Post Social Awareness	75.33	15.68	6.40			
Pre Relationship Skills	89.42	16.46	6.72	4.99	5	0.004
Post Relationship Skills	75.50	15.98	6.53			
Pre Responsible Decision Making	76.53	18.10	7.39	-0.39	5	0.72
Post Responsible Decision Making	78.75	13.85	5.66			
Pre Aggregate	74.67	12.56	5.13	-1.70	5	0.15
Post Aggregate	87.67	11.54	4.71			

The paired sample t -test between pre- and post-test examined levels of growth based on the American Institute of Research Self-Assessment of SEL Survey (Yoder, 2014a). The results show a significant difference from the beginning to the end ($t(5)=-2.47, p < .05, df=5$). See Table 24 for the descriptive statistics for the instructional practices that support SEL.

Table 24

Results of Paired Sample t -tests Between Pre-Test and Post-Test for Instructional Practices

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre Student-Centered Discipline	73.83	12.75	5.21	-1.38	5	0.23
Post Student-Centered Discipline	79.00	14.04	5.73			
Pre Teacher Language	89.50	14.55	5.94	.41	5	0.70
Post Teacher Language	87.67	11.54	4.71			
Pre Resp Choice	85.58	13.43	5.48	1.83	5	0.13
Post Resp Choice	73.83	12.75	5.21			
Pre Warm & Support	90.00	14.03	5.73	.154	5	0.88
Post Warm & Support	89.67	14.46	5.90			
Pre Cooperative Learning	66.67	20.41	8.33	-2.83	5	0.04
Post Cooperative Learning	85.67	13.31	5.43			
Pre Class Diff	75.33	16.28	6.65	-4.40	5	0.01
Post Class Diff	90.00	14.03	5.73			
Pre Self Reflection	84.00	14.97	6.11	2.47	5	0.06
Post Self Reflection	66.67	20.41	8.33			
Pre Balanced Instruction	85.92	12.27	5.01	2.78	5	0.04
Post Balanced Instruction	75.33	16.28	6.65			
Pre Academic Press	73.67	11.41	4.66	-3.72	5	0.01
Post-Academic Press	84.00	14.97	6.11			
Pre Comp Build	81.67	11.94	4.88	-2.87	5	0.04
Post Comp Build	86.17	12.35	5.04			
Pre Aggregate	74.00	11.31	4.62	-2.47	5	0.06
Post Aggregate	81.83	12.09	4.94			

The response to the second part of the second research question, “What changed in teachers’ instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes?” is that the

research partners grew in their instructional practices that support SEL and in the five SEL competencies. The quantitative data received validation from the qualitative data gleaned after completing the process understanding interviews which occurred as one of the final steps in Phase 2. The Process Understanding Protocol (Appendix J) guided the interview process. Although all the research partners provided responses worthy of its inclusion, space will not allow the researcher to include every response. However, the researcher ensured that each research partner's voice received representation.

Four themes emerged following the first and second coding cycles that were literal and focused. The four themes were teacher growth, student growth, strategy use, and academic growth. One of the research partners expressed how they were glad to be a part of the research study on a regular basis. A quote by the research partner opens the theme section as the quote wrapped several of the themes into one. This was common during the interview process. Jamie declared:

The students are in control of their learning. They study together, guess you could say, they can do more than we give them credit for. Even the high standard I hold them to and that they can do more than I expect and letting them do the cooperative learning. They are helping each other much more than I can and doing all the little groups and all that separate changing it up. So that is a different one for me, but knowing which ones are my teachers in my classroom and sitting them with my lower kids and they, my lower kids, are learning more from each other. Because the higher kids are learning it deeper from teaching, but my lower kids are hearing it in a different way from what I'm able to give. And, I think that's going to be more enriching throughout their life than what I can just give them in the classroom.

Teacher Growth. Each research partner's voice contributed to the teacher growth theme (see individual research partners data findings). Responses ranged from being able to articulate the meaning of cooperative learning to knowing and seeing the benefits of cooperative learning.

Student Growth. Student growth was evident in the classroom during classroom observations and while moving through the hallways of the building. A transformation of student behaviors evolved and learning was occurring. See evidence per the research partner's comments located in individual research partners data findings section. In addition, the students were excited to see the researcher; however, the researcher refrained from direct interaction per the approved document of the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Strategy Use. The research partners selected the cooperative learning strategy they wanted to use during the instructional cycle. In addition, the research partner could implement more than one at a time, as long as proper planning transpired prior to the lesson delivery. Comments ranged from being able to see the difference in the students and the classroom environment since implementing the cooperative learning strategies to level of comfort/ease in using the cooperative learning strategies. Additional comments about the strategy use theme are in the individual research partners data findings section.

Academic Growth. Academic growth was a natural occurrence in the learning environment. The students were working as a unit and eager to assist their peers and their teachers, the research partners. There was a shift in the learning atmosphere. Research partner's comments varied from normally quiet students forming complete sentences and sharing during class discussion to students' test scores improving as a result of the students using the cooperative learning strategies.

The final confirmation to the second part of the research question came from Jamie's final quote, and Jamie stated:

Do I know everything about it? Well, definitely not, but I have a better grasp than I did a couple months ago. And I can see where it's leading. And this is why I want to continue doing it this way, because my children are getting more and more engaged. They're not just sitting there, they're not zoning out, you know they are productive with it. And when they go to their groups and when I change the groups up, they don't get use to each other and form clusters that isolate others. Instead, they are open to the new partners or group members. Also, giving them a timeline, it really helped you know they knew they had a certain time, and they sat down and they actually worked better than I thought they would. So, it's working! Plus, it's keeping things different and enjoyable in here. And that's what we want. We want them to enjoy education, enjoy learning, so they can continue learning and growing.

The data reflect the group processed the content shared during that professional learning session and was receptive to the information shared during the reflective coaching practice sessions. Furthermore, the data support fidelity of implementation of the cooperative learning strategies amongst the six research partners.

Summary

The findings reflect the six research partners efforts and commitment to honor the working theory of improvement's intervention design plan produced positive results. The quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated that the research partners' practices that impact SEL development was occurring with their students and them. Furthermore, the dialogue with the research partners indicated they knew why regression, stability, or growth occurred.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The researcher gathered a cross-section of perspectives and experiences from the Alliance Elementary School and Sunrise Elementary School research partners using the working theory of improvement, which included an intervention design plan (Appendix N), and the literature review. This section presented a discussion on the findings, implications, recommendations, and areas for future research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was an exploration seeking to impact teacher practices that support SEL during their instructional process, which directly or indirectly impacted the students' social, emotional, and academic development (Yoder, 2014b). Research showed that students receiving instruction that required them to interact with their peers and teachers, think critically, and speak to each other did more than increase their academic abilities, it also developed their social and emotional skills (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Kendziora & Yoder, 2016; Malkemes & Waters, 2017). In addition, research found a direct link to students' SEL development, their health, and their emotional intelligence (Espelage et al., 2018; Greenberg et al., 2017; Pérez et al., 2020). Therefore, grounded on the root cause analysis and validation of the problem of practice, the belief was that by implementing rapid, robust intervention cycles with the teachers, the students would begin to develop their SEL skills as a result of the teachers using practices that support SEL during the instructional process. Accordingly, having the teachers shift their lesson delivery approach required them to make behavior adjustments (Brackett et al., 2015), and each research partner stated they were willing to make the necessary changes.

Research Questions

RQ1

- To what degree were teachers in this context consistently utilizing practices supportive of students' social-emotional development?

RQ2

- Did data reflect individualized professional learning and coaching a viable practice for schools and districts to use as support for teachers' increased practice?
 - What changed in teachers' instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes?

Discussion of the Results

The six research partners fulfilled each request asked of them throughout the research study. The data shared in Chapter 4 revealed some expected data. However, there were some findings that needed an explanation to clarify that what appeared as negative data was actually positive data.

Discussion for Research Question One

To what degree were teachers in this context consistently utilizing practices supportive of students' social-emotional development? During the professional learning session, after the research partners experienced the content, they selected the cooperative learning strategy they wanted to implement in their learning environments. At this point, the researcher provided additional information and explicit modeling to demonstrate what the strategy would look like in the particular research partner's environment such as age-appropriate expectations. Within an instructional day, the research partners began using Think-Pair-Share (T-P-S) to introduce the concept of cooperative learning to the students. However, prior to demonstrating T-P-S, it was

essential that the research partner modeled the expected behaviors and established norms for cooperative learning (Mulroy & Austin, 2005). Once the students understood the expectations, the research partners began using the instructional practices that support SEL; more precisely, cooperative learning. The strategy was implemented immediately because the research partners knew the improvement science's working theory of improvement process required rapid cycles of interventions (Bryk et al., 2015; Crow et al., 2019; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Perry et al., 2020). Therefore, the research partners started without delay.

Table 18 provided data pertaining to the selected strategy and frequency of use. However, the level of use data (Table 19) aligned with implementation and consistency (Durlak, 2015; Hord et al., 1987). The research partners had to use the practices that support SEL consistently to move on the continuum (Appendix P). All six research partners were at the routine level by the third observation. To move from non-use (level 0) to routine (level 3) in three weeks, signaled consistency as well (Hall & Hord, 2015). Therefore, the research partners received commendation for their efforts and dedication to the research process, embracing the strategies, but more importantly for implementing the strategies daily. Taking the time to acknowledge the research partners' efforts was just as important as providing feedback about their implementations and location on the continuum. Consequently, the commendations or praises given to the research partners seemed to have a direct connection to the individual's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Ultimately, the research partners' self-efficacy influenced how well they were able to use the skills learned, were willing to try again if the first attempt with implementing the cooperative learning strategy was unsuccessful, affected the learning environment they created for their students, and how they interacted with their students during lesson delivery (Bandura, 1993; Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018). Therefore, supporting the research partners encompassed

more than discussing the quantitative aspect of the frequency of strategy use and their location on the level of use continuum. By the final observation, one research partner returned to the mechanical stage on the continuum because the research partner was implementing a new cooperative learning strategy with the students. Therefore, returning to mechanical is normal and welcomed (Hall & Hord, 2015; Hord et al., 1987).

Discussion for Research Question Two

Did data reflect individualized professional learning and coaching a viable practice for schools and districts to use as support for teachers' increased practice? What changed in teachers' instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes?

In response to the first part of the question, the exit ticket data revealed the research partners understood the content delivered during the PLS. However, the power of the individualized PLS seemed to materialize during the classroom observations, the reflective coaching practice sessions, and the process understanding interviews. For instance, during the coding process of the reflective coaching practice sessions, language referring to understanding what it meant for the students to have control of their learning, exploring additional strategies to implement in the classroom, and desiring continued personalized support generated themes because multiple research partners voiced the same sentiments. The shared sentiments indicated the viability of the individualized PLS and coaching as practices schools and districts can use as support for increasing teachers practices which leads to increased student cooperative learning. Furthermore, during the second observation cycle, two of the research partners inquired on behalf of their peers if they would be able to receive the same support. Further inquiry revealed the research partners were discussing how the researcher sat with them in a non-threatening manner, shared the scripted notes based on the lesson observed, had a conversation with them

about the observation, created next steps with them, and modeled the next steps expectations if they needed a visual support. Additional delving disclosed the research partners' colleagues wanted to know if it was too late for them to be a part of the research study because they stated they wanted and needed that level and kind of support structure to assist them with meeting the needs of their students as well as to help them learn about SEL.

What changed in teachers' instructional practices and what are the causes of the observed changes? The data reflected teachers' practices that support SEL and the SEL competency changed. The results for the group showed the research partners grew and/or maintained. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics, namely the *t*-test, produced results that showed a significant difference from the beginning to the end. However, in order to learn the specifics for the change and why, a closer look at each research partner occurred. The closer look at each instructional practice validated the researcher's belief that the high impact strategy, cooperative learning, would impact other instructional practices and increase the research partners' utilization of instructional practices that support their students' SEL development. Moreover, the closer look provided the researcher with critical information that supported the visual evidence seen during the classroom observations and the discussions had during the reflective coaching practice sessions which made the personalized support meaningful (Johnson et al., 2017; Slade et al., 2019). In addition, the individual data corroborated the need for personalized coaching as each research partner responded positively; however, their approach to the learning cultivated different perspectives and techniques (Kraft & Blazar, 2018; Ma et al., 2018).

It is evident how the research partners embraced professional learning and engaged in the reflective coaching practice sessions (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020; Almerico, 2018; Duran, 2017; Girvan et al., 2016; Greenberg et al., 2017; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Kendziora & Yoder,

2016; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Yoder, 2014b, 2014a). Most importantly, it was the application of the learning that ultimately caused the success they experienced (Durlak, 2015).

Limitations

In standard research practices, the small sample size of this study would be a concern or considered a weakness of the sampling. However, for the purpose of this case study, the size was a strength. The size was a strength because in case study analysis, an extended in-depth examination can help engage research partners while gathering intricate knowledge (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Furthermore, the knowledge gained became the catalyst for making immediate adjustments as needed (Perry et al., 2020). According to Bryk et al. (2017), decisions/changes should occur in quick intervals; hence, the sample size was instrumental in the research progressing as designed. Therefore, two strengths of the sampling plan were all the participants met the criteria for the case study and the study population/sample was small (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Time would be another potential limitation for traditional research. Nonetheless, for the improvement science research, time could potentially move at a rapid pace (Bryk et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2020). The rapid pace was an essential component for responding to the data generated from the intervention. Moreover, the fast moving rhythm granted the researcher and research partners the time needed to explore alternative approaches based on the data (Perry et al., 2020). As a result of the need for rapid cycles, time was a strength for this improvement science research (Bryk et al., 2017; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Perry et al., 2020).

Another usual limitation of research studies with small size sampling and limited time is generalizability (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Whereas, generalizability pertained to the site of the research study. In addition, the research study suggests traits of transferability per the

research partners' embrace of the professional learning sessions from the onset, followed by their thick descriptions during the process understanding interviews and throughout the reflective coaching protocol interactions (Daniel, 2018). Likewise, due to previous research that suggests the effectiveness of this type of reflective coaching in SEL, this research study suggests traits of transferability for rural, urban, and suburban schools regardless of size (Edmond et al., 2021; Yoder & Nolan, 2018).

A fourth limitation of the research study would be researcher/observer bias. However, understanding the concern about observer bias during direct observations prompted the researcher to use alternative approaches to address the concern. One approach the researcher used was interviews (Martella et al., 2013). The end-user empathy consultations, process understanding interviews, and the pre and post AIR Self-Assessment for SEL Survey (Yoder, 2014a) strengthened the triangulation and served as a safeguards to ensure the researcher's positionality did not influence the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Fusch et al., 2018). To further address the researcher/observer bias concerns, the researcher employed various documents (i.e., reflective coaching protocol and exit tickets) (Martella et al., 2013).

Recommendations for Practice and Future Research

There are eight recommendations based on the findings of the current research. Five of the recommendations relate to practice and the remaining three recommendations align with future research. School districts desiring to increase teachers' practices that support SEL and increase cooperative learning with students will want to consider the positive results of this study as it demonstrates teachers' and student's growth occurred quickly.

Practice

The findings revealed the research partners' willingness to respond to effective, meaningful professional learning in a repetitive nature consistent with reflective coaching practice sessions. Furthermore, the research partners expressed hopes of continuing the process of self-assessing how they are developing in the area of addressing their students' SEL development. Open-ended conversations revealed the research partners valued hearing they were making progress and shared how those words encouraged them to give their best. Additionally, the research partners expressed learning the meaning of SEL helped them understanding why they were doing certain behaviors.

Recommendation 1. The first recommendation is to provide a direct, explicit, meaningful professional learning session on SEL, reflective coaching practices, the 10 instructional practices that support SEL, and cooperative learning strategies for each staff member assigned to providing instruction to students (this includes para-professionals). The research shows that when teachers received professional development and applied the ten practices that support SEL, followed by ongoing support, they experienced more success, especially in regards to implementation and SEL development (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020; Durlak, 2015; Yoder, 2014b). Per the current research, the research partners demonstrated the benefits received from the direct, explicit meaningful professional learning session that occurred utilizing a personalized approach. As research expressed, teachers learning the what and the how concerning new content, for this research study, the instructional practices that support SEL, and implementing the cooperative learning strategies in the classroom was essential for them to be successful (Ferguson-Patrick, 2010). Therefore, ensuring the progress established by the research partners proceeds, the same methodology used should continue.

Recommendation 2. The second recommendation is to provide personalized reflective coaching sessions with each staff member assigned to providing instruction to students (this includes para-professionals). The findings revealed the impact reflective coaching practices had on the research partners' comprehension and implementation of the high impact strategy, cooperative learning, and how it impacted their use of the instructional practices that supported their students' SEL development. Likewise, the findings from the current study aligned with Abramczyk and Jurkowski (2020), Durlak (2015), and Jones and Doolittle (2017) research that focused on providing teachers with on-going support during implementations which contributed to quality implementations. Furthermore, the research partners articulated knowing they would receive the one-on-one support throughout the research study made a difference in how they were able to follow through with the daily implementations of the cooperative learning strategies that supported their students SEL (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020; Florian & Beaton, 2018; Sharma & Saarsar, 2018). As the findings indicated, the research partners found the reflective coaching practice valuable. Accordingly, if leadership desires similar results as the research yielded, the reflective coaching practice should be a normal behavior for supporting all whom interact with the students during their educational lessons.

Recommendation 3. The third recommendation is to administer the AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey three to four times a year to each staff member assigned to providing instruction to students (this includes para-professionals). The rationale behind this recommendation centered on the premise that in order to know where to begin addressing the students' SEL development, one should know where the deficits and strengths reside (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Yoder, 2014a). Therefore, Yoder (2014a) designed a self-assessment survey to help teachers reflect on the 10 teaching practices that support social and

emotional learning for students. The research partners experienced Yoder's (2014a) self-assessment survey twice, pre- and post-assessment, during the rapid cycles of the improvement science research. However, the recommendation to administer the AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey three to four times a year would synchronize well with the trimester (beginning, middle, end) or quarterly (every nine weeks) reporting system. By doing the self-assessment in alignment with the grading system for the district, the teachers will receive data informing them of their status on how they are progressing with providing an environment that is conducive for the students' SEL development as well as inform the next cycle for personalized professional development and reflective coaching sessions (Blank, 2002; Cheon et al., 2018; Gardner et al., 2019; Yoder, 2014a). It is imperative the teachers complete a SEL survey, preferably the same self-assessment survey used during the research study to establish a baseline and multiple times throughout the implementation phase for the reason stated.

Recommendation 4. The fourth recommendation is to create a calendar to celebrate the students and teachers SEL growth. Adopting the mindset that all things worthy of recognizing deserves proper planning positions the reasoning for why a calendar of celebrations to honor students and teachers SEL growth is important (Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Sheldon, 2016). Maslow (1954) identified the fourth tier, esteem (self-esteem), as consisting of achievements, recognition of work/effort, respect for self, and respect for others. According to Fisher and Crawford (2020), when the community (students and teachers) received recognition, they developed a healthy competition that focused on self-improvement and aligned with the esteem tier of Maslow's Hierarchy. As a result, the desire to continue excelling perpetuates additional growth and greater success occurs (Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Maslow, 1954). Likewise, the research partners demonstrated and experienced the same behavior when they received

commendations from the researcher for moving on the level of use continuum and for daily implementation of the cooperative learning strategies. Therefore, the research partners' behaviors buttressed Fisher and Crawford's (2020) research results. Hence, planning a designated time to celebrate the teachers and students SEL development would publicize the value of the expectation and allow the community (all stakeholders) to plan accordingly to attend the event, which would encourage the desired growth to continue (Sheldon, 2016).

Recommendation 5. A part of the exploration during the improvement science research was to probe the parent-student handbook. During the exploration, discoveries revealed the absence of a definition for social and emotional learning. The recommendation is to craft a section for the parent-student handbook that includes the definition for social and emotional learning, as well as specific language outlining how students social and emotional concerns, diagnosed and undiagnosed, will receive support via the classroom teacher and campus members—other than the school counselor (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Weissberg et al., 2015). After crafting the section, all stakeholders (i.e., students, parents, teachers, support staff, leaders, and community) should receive an explicit explanation about the contents prior to or while receiving a copy of the revised parent-student handbook.

Future Research

Several areas for future research can add to the current findings. The following three recommendations will assist with filling in gaps that exist for academicians/researchers that relate to the findings of this study. Beyond filling in gaps, the future research recommendations can generate additional findings to extend the current findings (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). Moreover, additional research in rural school districts would benefit the educational arena (Durlak et al., 2011).

Recommendation 1. Take a deeper dive into how age, teaching experience, locale, and ethnicity factors into teachers' practices that support SEL. Taking a deeper dive could discover possible bias or belief systems. Learning information from these data could provide insight into how particular groups and/or cluster of individuals would need support in their SEL development and how to integrate SEL into their instructional process. In addition, these data could uncover the rationale for why some of the current unrest is occurring. According to Hecht and Shin (2015), cultural context has a bearing on how an individual responds to SEL. Therefore, advancing the current study through this lens could contribute a deeper understanding pertaining to the how to support the individual or group and the why a particular approach for support is necessary (Patti et al., 2015).

Recommendation 2. Expand the current research to a district-wide concept for Mann School District (MSD). Expanding the research for MSD could present an opportunity for a larger data set and increased explanations for findings. In addition, implementing the research district-wide could extend to the teaching community opportunities for the research partners from the study to model and provide reflective coaching with their peers (Mart et al., 2015; Patti et al., 2015). Furthermore, having a larger data set could enable the district to identify trends and unveil occurrences they would like to magnify and/or eliminate. A great benefit of conducting the research via the district-wide concept could be taking SEL to scale in the four schools by engaging the community. Taking SEL to scale district-wide could provide SEL exposure and support for the students and staff during and after the school hours (Fagan et al., 2015). Expanding the current research district-wide and developing SEL to scale could be the game-changer for the entire district as all the stakeholders could benefit.

Recommendation 3. Conduct the research model in other rural school districts.

Conducting the research model in other rural school districts would add to the scholarly arena on research conducted in rural districts, which is minimal (Durlak et al., 2011; O’Conner et al., 2017). In addition, performing the research in a rural school district would be a financial benefit to the district. Due to limited funding, rural schools are unable to provide the most current programming, resources, and/or professional development (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015). Therefore, conducting future research in rural school districts would grant the teachers and students access to current pedagogy and strategies that impact the as they actively engage in the research process.

Conclusion

Students learning in a classroom where the teachers’ practices that support SEL are absent contributes to the students leaving school without proper SEL development, which impacts their quality of life as adults (Espelage et al., 2018; Keefer et al., 2018; Rivera-Pérez et al., 2020; Sanchez-Gomez et al., 2021; Wisniewski & Foster, 2020). Therefore, for this Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice, the researcher desired to impact the teachers’ practices that support SEL. For this to occur the researcher implemented the improvement science working theory of improvement to structure interactions with the research partners to advance the study. A part of the work required root cause analysis and a review of literature.

The root cause analysis and the literature merged resulting in a driver diagram that situated the need of the research partners to become knowledgeable about SEL. However, being knowledgeable was not enough, the research partners needed to receive personalized professional learning and reflective coaching practice sessions. As a result, the findings of this study revealed the teachers’ practices that support SEL grew immensely, as did the students

cooperative learning opportunities and engagement, therefore validating the significance of the research study.

This research provided additional insight into the impact relevant, effective professional development and meaningful reflective coaching practices had on improving teachers' practices that support SEL. In addition, consumers of scholarly writing can recognize how the teachers' practices that support SEL fostered the students' SEL development. Moreover, utilizing the improvement science approach demonstrated the effectiveness of implementing quick, short intervention cycles that benefitted the SEL and academic growth of teachers and students. Furthermore, this body of research contributed to the limited research available pertaining to research studies actualized in rural districts.

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Appendix A

Environmental Informant Interview Protocol

Participant IDNO <input type="text"/>	Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Date <input type="text"/>		
<p>Introduction I am _____ from _____</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ General purpose of the study ✓ Aims of the interview and expected duration ✓ Who is involved in the process (other participants) ✓ Why the participant's cooperation is important </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What will happen with the collected information and how the participant/target group will benefit ✓ Any questions? ✓ Consent </td> </tr> </table> <p>Warm up [demographic & work history] Can I ask some details about you and your job?</p> <p>Job Title _____</p> <p>Now I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences as an administrator /a teacher in this district/school.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ General purpose of the study ✓ Aims of the interview and expected duration ✓ Who is involved in the process (other participants) ✓ Why the participant's cooperation is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What will happen with the collected information and how the participant/target group will benefit ✓ Any questions? ✓ Consent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ General purpose of the study ✓ Aims of the interview and expected duration ✓ Who is involved in the process (other participants) ✓ Why the participant's cooperation is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What will happen with the collected information and how the participant/target group will benefit ✓ Any questions? ✓ Consent 			
Domain	Topic and Probes			
SEL Practices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me about your areas of growth or your next step in social and emotional learning (SEL) practices. 2. What advice might you give to those hoping to increase SEL practices? 			
Self-Awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What are the pitfalls I should expect to encounter on this journey? 			
Social Justice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. In thinking about the current social justice climate, what professional learning session(s) are you [planning (admin) attending (teacher)] that would influence interactions within the learning environment. <p style="text-align: center;">Probe: How do you vision the professional learning impacting the teachers' and/or students' social, emotional, and academic development?</p>			
<p>Closing Is there anything else you think is important about your school climate and culture that we have not talked about?</p>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Summarize ✓ Thank participant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide extra information and contacts to participants 			

Appendix B

AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey

Overview

The Self-Assessment of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Survey developed by the Center on Great teacher and Leaders at the American Institutes of Research (Yoder, 2014) is designed to help teachers reflect on 10 teaching practices that support social and emotional learning for students. The assessment identifies and provides ratings (i.e., Part A, ratings 1-5 and Part B ratings 1-4) for the 10 teaching practices that support social, emotional, and academic skills. In addition, two categories (i.e., social teaching practices and instructional teaching practices) emerged to assist teachers with self-evaluation of their current implementation of teaching student social, emotional, and academic skills and the teacher's competency development of their personal social, emotional, and academic skills. Yoder's (2014) AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey, outlined below, is the tool used for self-evaluation purposes and occurs during Phase 1. The results from the AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey will inform the professional learning session (PLS) and reflective coaching sessions that transpire during Phase 2.

Directions

This survey is divided into the following two sections, with Section 1 and Section 2 each divided into two parts:

Section 1. Social Interaction Assessment

Part A. Self-assess implementation of teaching practices

Part B. Self-assess teachers' own SEL competencies

Section 2. Instructional Interaction Assessment

Part A. Self-assess implementation of teaching practices

Part B. Self-assess teachers' own SEL competencies

Sections 1 and 2, Part A—You will have the opportunity to self-assess on teaching practices. Section 1 focuses on social interactions, and Section 2 focuses on instructional interactions.

Sections 1 and 2, Part B—Educators consider their own SECs and how their SECs influence their ability to implement (1) social teaching practices, and (2) instructional teaching practices. Teachers will rate their SECs on a four-point scale, from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 4 = “strongly agree”.

Section 1: Social Interactions

Part A. Teaching Practices. Think about how often you implement a variety of practices that influence students' social, emotional, and academic skills. Think about how often you implement teaching practices that focus on positive social interactions. Using a scale of 1 to 5, rate how often and how well you use these practices.

1—I do not implement this practice

4—I generally implement this practice well

2—I struggle to implement this practice

5—I implement this practice extremely well

3—I implement this practice reasonably well

1. Student-Centered Discipline		
SEL Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I have discussions with my students about how and why classroom procedures are implemented.		
b. I implement consequences that are logical to the rule that is broken.		
c. I am consistent in implementing classroom rules and consequences.		
d. I respond to misbehavior by considering pupil specific social, affective, cognitive, and/or environmental factors that is associated with occurrence of the behavior.		
e. I hold class discussions with my students so we can solve class problems.		
f. I ask my students to reflect and redirect their behavior when they misbehave.		
g. I teach students strategies to handle the emotions that affect their learning (e.g., stress, frustration).		
h. I model strategies that will help students to monitor and regulate their behavior.		

2. Teacher Language		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I promote positive behaviors by encouraging my students when they display good social skills (e.g., acknowledge positive actions or steps to improve).		
b. I promote positive behaviors by encouraging my students when they display good work habits (e.g., acknowledge positive actions or steps to improve).		
c. I let my students know how their effort leads to positive results with specific affirmation.		

3. Responsibility and Choice		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I let my students help plan how they are going to learn in developmentally appropriate ways.		
b. I ask for student input when making decisions about how the classroom will operate in developmentally appropriate ways.		
c. I give students meaningful choices (with parameters) on what they can work on.		
d. I make sure students make the connection between their choices and potential consequences.		
e. I arrange experiences that allow my students to become responsible (e.g., classroom aids or jobs, peer tutoring, specific roles in group work) in developmentally appropriate ways.		

4. Warmth and Support		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I demonstrate to each student that I appreciate him or her as an individual (e.g., appropriate eye-contact, greeting each child by name).		
b. I use the interests and experiences of my students when teaching.		
c. I display to my students that I care about how and what they learn.		
d. I let my students know that it is okay to get answers wrong or think outside of the box (e.g., modeling, praising attempts with “good thinking”).		
e. I check in with my students about academic and nonacademic concerns they might have.		
f. I follow up with my students when they have a problem or concern.		
g. I create structures in the classroom where my students feel included and appreciated (e.g., morning meetings, small moments, whole-class share outs).		

Part B. Teacher Social and Emotional Competencies. Now think about your own social and emotional competencies and how those competencies influence your ability to implement the *social interaction teaching practices*. Please use the scoring guide below to rate yourself on how your SEL skills influence your *social interaction teaching practices* with your students. Consider each statement and score yourself according to where each statement holds true for you.

1 = Strongly disagree. I have a difficult time with this practice. I know I do some of the things mentioned, but I do not necessarily find them relevant to my teaching.

2 = Disagree. I demonstrate some of these skills with my students. I think with more practice and/or more support, I could demonstrate these skills more to improve implementation of this practice.

3 = Agree. I am strong in this area. I know I do a good job modeling these skills for my students. I use these skills most of the time when I implement the instructional practices.

4 = Strongly agree. I am very strong in this area. I am able to use these skills when I am implementing the instructional practices.

Self-Awareness

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am aware of social teaching practices that I need to improve upon and grow professionally.	1	2	3	4
I can effectively implement social teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I am usually aware of how my emotions, culturally grounded beliefs, and background are precursors to my emotional reactions, and I understand how they impact my social teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I understand how student responses (positive and negative) affect my emotions and my behaviors during social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I am aware of how my cultural beliefs and background affect my social teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4

Self-Management/Emotion Regulation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I continuously refine my personal goals about how I will best implement social teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I effectively use multiple strategies (e.g., breathing techniques and mindfulness) when I have a strong emotional reaction in the classroom (e.g., stress, anger) when implementing social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
Through the effective management of my emotions (e.g., use of stress reduction techniques), I am better able to implement social teaching practices , use positive approaches to discipline, and develop a positive learning environment that is free from bias and prejudice.	1	2	3	4
I model behaviors (e.g., form guidelines, set boundaries) to help students learn to regulate emotions during social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4

Social Awareness

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
To effectively implement positive social teaching practices , I usually understand the perspectives of my students and can pay attention to their emotional cues during classroom interactions.	1	2	3	4
I try to understand why my students are or are not actively participating, and I am usually successful at providing my students the necessary skills to participate in the social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I successfully support positive emotions and respond to negative emotions during social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I address the commonalities and differences (e.g., racial, ethnic, cultural) that exist among students when I implement the social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4

Relationship/Social Skills

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I clearly communicate behavioral and academic expectations in a manner that addresses students' individual needs and strengths when implementing social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I am comfortable helping my students resolve interpersonal conflicts that come up during social teaching practices , and I have experienced success with this.	1	2	3	4
I use the social teaching practices to help form meaningful relationships with my students and cultivate their SEL skills, and I am usually successful at building meaningful relationships.	1	2	3	4
I use the social teaching practices to help cultivate my students' SEL skills, and I am usually successful at building their SEL skills.	1	2	3	4

Responsible Decision Making

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am effective at considering multiple forms of evidence, such as balancing the needs and the behaviors of my entire class, while implementing the social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I regularly include my students and/or collaborate with colleagues to solve problems that arise in the classroom related to the social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I stay focused and consistent when I implement social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
When I implement the social teaching practices , I balance students' emotional needs and academic needs.	1	2	3	4

Section 2: Instructional Interactions

Part A. Teaching Practices. Think about how often you implement a variety of practices that influence students' social, emotional, and academic skills. Think about how often you implement teaching practices that focus on positive instructional interactions. Using a scale of 1 to 5, rate how often and how well you use these practices.

1—I do not implement this practice

4—I generally implement this practice well

2—I struggle to implement this practice

5—I implement this practice extremely well

3—I implement this practice reasonably well

5. Cooperative Learning/Group Learning		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I encourage my students to work with other students when they have trouble with an assignment.		
b. I create learning experiences in which my students depend on each other.		
c. I create learning experiences in which my students must apply positive social skills to be successful.		
d. I hold individuals and the group accountable for learning during small-group work.		
e. I provide opportunities for my students to share their work and receive feedback from each other.		
f. I provide space to allow my students to collaboratively process how they work together and monitor their progress toward their goal.		
g. I give students feedback on how they interact with and learn from others during cooperative learning experiences.		

6. Classroom Discussions		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I help my students identify how to listen (e.g., tracking the speaker, making mental connections).		
b. I help students learn how to respond to and learn from their peers' contributions during a discussion.		
c. I help my students learn how to effectively communicate their points of view (e.g., elaborate on their thinking).		
d. I hold in-depth discussions about content with my students.		
e. I ask my students to listen to and think about their peers' opinions and whether they agree with them.		

7. Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I tell my students the learning goals for each lesson.		
b. I have my students reflect on their personal academic goals (e.g., make connections to the lesson goals).		
c. I provide my students strategies to analyze their work (e.g., using performance rubrics, peer reviews).		
d. I create opportunities for my students to monitor and reflect on their progress toward their learning goals.		
e. I create opportunities for my students to monitor and reflect on their social learning.		
f. I help my students develop strategies to make sure they meet their learning goals.		
g. I provide my students opportunities to reflect on their thinking and learning processes (e.g., using graphic organizers or journals).		
h. I ask my students to think together to provide feedback on the effectiveness of learning activities (e.g., debriefing tool, feedback form, simple survey).		

8. Balanced Instruction		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I use an appropriate balance between providing students opportunities to directly learn new information, as well as actively engage in the material.		
b. I have my students work on some extended projects that require at least one week to complete.		
c. I require my students to extend their thinking when they provide basic answers (e.g., ask multiple follow-up questions).		
d. I use multiple instructional strategies to keep my students engaged in learning.		
e. I make sure that my activities are not just fun, but represent one of the best ways for students to learn the content.		
f. I ask students to work on products (e.g., Web pages, skits, or posters) that are meant to be shared with multiple audiences (e.g., parents, community members).		

9. Academic Press and Expectations		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I give my students more challenging problems when they have mastered easier material.		
b. I ensure that my students feel responsible for accomplishing or failing to accomplish their academic work.		
c. I teach my students the connection between effort and results, and I expect my students to put in full effort.		
d. I give my students work that has more than one right answer and ask them to defend their answers		
e. I support my students socially and emotionally while challenging them with new or higher levels of learning.		

10. Competence Building—Modeling, Practicing, Feedback, and Coaching		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I model and practice new learning with my students before asking them to perform independently.		
b. I demonstrate a concept using a variety of tools (e.g., modeling, demonstrations, mini-lessons, or texts).		
c. I conference with my students on ways to make their work better.		
d. I use multiple strategies with my students until they have figured out how to solve the problem (i.e., graphic organizers, leveled text, checklist, verbal cues).		
e. I give my students frequent specific feedback to let them know how they are doing in my class (academically and socially).		
f. I have my students correct their mistakes (academic or social) based on feedback from me or their peers.		
g. I provide specific feedback that is focused on the academic task at hand.		
h. I use student misconceptions to guide my instruction without singling the student out.		

Part B. Teacher Social and Emotional Competency. Now think about your own social and emotional competencies and how those competencies influence your ability to implement the *instructional interaction teaching practices*. Please use the scoring guide below to rate how your SEL skills influence your *instructional interaction teaching practices* with your students. Consider each statement and score yourself according to where each statement holds true for you.

1 = Strongly disagree. I have a difficult time with this practice. I know I do some of the things mentioned, but I do not necessarily find them relevant to my teaching.

2 = Disagree. I demonstrate some of these skills with my students. I think with more practice and/or more support, I could demonstrate these skills more to improve implementation of this practice.

3 = Agree. I am strong in this area. I know I do a good job modeling these skills for my students. I use these skills most of the time when I implement the instructional practices.

4 = Strongly agree. I am very strong in this area. I am able to use these skills when I am implementing the instructional practices.

Self-Awareness

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am aware of instructional teaching practices that I need to improve in order to grow professionally.	1	2	3	4
I can effectively implement instructional teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I am usually aware of how my emotions, culturally grounded beliefs, and background are precursors to my emotional reactions, and I understand how they impact my instructional teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I understand how student responses (positive and negative) affect my emotions and my behaviors during instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I am aware of how my cultural beliefs and background affect my instructional teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4

Self-Management/Emotion Regulation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I continuously refine my personal goals about how I will best implement instructional teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I effectively use multiple strategies (e.g., breathing techniques and mindfulness) when I have a strong emotional reaction in the classroom (e.g., stress, anger) when implementing instructional practices .	1	2	3	4
Through the effective management of my emotions (e.g., use of stress reduction techniques), I am better able to implement instructional teaching practices and to develop a positive learning environment that is free from bias and prejudice.	1	2	3	4
I model behaviors (e.g., form guidelines, set boundaries) to help students learn to regulate emotions during instructional practices .	1	2	3	4

Social Awareness

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
To effectively implement positive instructional teaching practices , I usually understand the perspectives of my students and can pay attention to their emotional cues during classroom interactions.	1	2	3	4
I try to understand why my students are or are not actively participating, and I am usually successful at providing my students the necessary skills to participate in the instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I successfully support positive emotions and respond to negative emotions during instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I address the commonalities and differences (e.g., racial, ethnic, cultural) that exist among students when I implement the instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4

Relationship/Social Skills

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I clearly communicate behavioral and academic expectations in a manner that addresses students' individual needs and strengths when implementing instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I am comfortable helping my students resolve interpersonal conflicts that come up during instructional teaching practices , and I have experienced success with this.	1	2	3	4
I use the instructional teaching practices to help form meaningful relationships with my students and cultivate their SEL skills, and I am usually successful at building meaningful relationships.	1	2	3	4
I use the instructional teaching practices to help cultivate my students' SEL skills, and I am usually successful at building their SEL skills.	1	2	3	4

Responsible Decision Making

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am effective at considering multiple forms of evidence, such as balancing the needs and the behaviors of my entire class, while implementing the instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I regularly include my students and/or collaborate with colleagues to solve problems that arise in the classroom related to the instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I stay focused and consistent when I implement instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
When I implement the instructional teaching practices , I balance awareness of students' emotional needs and academic needs.	1	2	3	4

Appendix C

Informed Consent



Sacred Heart UNIVERSITY

The Isabelle Farrington College of Education

Title of Research Study: An Investigation of the Impact of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Teaching Practices

Researcher:	Tammi Dockett-Wilson	
	Phone:	Email: dockett-wilsons@mail.sacredheart.edu
Faculty Sponsor:	T. Lee Morgan, Ph.D.	
	Phone: 203.365.4774	E-mail: morgant2@sacredheart.edu

Study Site:

Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a research study. By doing this research we hope to learn about practices that educators utilize to support social emotional learning (SEL) in the classroom.

Procedures

If you consent to be part of this research study, you will be invited to participate in two interviews (i.e., end-user empathy and process understanding). The interviews will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this research study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to participate in interviews for any reason without penalty. If you choose to participate in the study, you do not have to answer any question during the interview if you do not want to answer. You will be audio recorded during the interview/focus group process. If you do not want to be audio recorded, please inform the researcher, and only hand-written notes will be taken during the interview.

Risks or Discomforts

Risks to participants are minimal as questions are standard questions teachers use to evaluate their practice and participants are not identified. You may decline to any question or end the interview. You may also choose to withdraw from the study. There will be no penalty, no negative consequences, and no removal of other benefits to which you are entitled if you decline to answer any questions, end the interview, or withdraw from the study. If you choose not to participate, that will have no impact on your position as a teacher in the Dumas Public School District, nor on my relationship with you.

Confidentiality

All data will be stored with no identifiers only study identification number and kept confidential when information is presented or published about this study. All communications and audio recordings of interviews will have coded numbers assigned before and during storage and will be destroyed three years after completion of the study.

Page 1 of 2 _____

(participant initials here)



Sacred Heart UNIVERSITY

The research records are held by researchers at an academic institution; therefore, the records may be subject to disclosure if required by law. The research information may be shared with federal agencies or local committees who are responsible for protecting research participants, including individuals on behalf the Sacred Heart University.

Questions

Researcher will take the data from the interviews to identify themes related to teachers' practices that support SEL. These findings will also be presented at an academic conference and possibly be published. If published all data will be presented with not identifying information to ensure the confidentiality of all participants and no names will be attached to any specific data and all data will only be reported in the aggregate.

Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research.

If you have any questions about this research study, you may contact me, Tammi Dockett-Wilson, at dockett-wilson@mail.sacredheart.edu If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, you can contact the Sacred Heart University Institutional Review Board at alpfi@sacredheart.edu or 203-396-8241.

Options for Participation

Please **initial** your choice for the options below:

_____ The researchers may audio record me during the interview process of this study.

_____ The researchers may NOT audio record me during the interview process of this study.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Participant Signature

Date

Participant Printed Name

Researcher Signature

Date

Page 2 of 2 _____
(participant initials here)

Appendix D

Educator Recruitment Letter

October 29, 2021

Dear Educator,

My name is Tammi Dockett-Wilson, and I am a graduate student in the Isabelle Farrington College of Education at Sacred Heart University. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about social and emotional teaching practices to improve student outcomes. As a researcher, I hope to understand practices that educators utilize to support social emotional learning in the classroom.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Agree to participate in two interview/focus group sessions to help determine how best to help educators build capacity to implement social and emotional teaching practices to improve student outcomes.
- Agree to participate in weekly observation and coaching sessions designed to develop educator capacity to utilize teaching practices that are supportive of students' social and emotional development
- Agree to participate in a professional learning session designed to develop a deeper understanding of the impact of social and emotional teaching practices on student outcomes, including behavioral and academic.

The information gathered in these activities will be used for the completion of a dissertation study towards the award of a graduate degree. All information will be completely confidential, and no identifiable information will be revealed in reports.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may decide to discontinue participation at any time. If you need additional information about the study, please contact me at _____ or email me at dockett-wilsont@mail.sacredheart.edu.

With appreciation,

Tammi Y. Dockett-Wilson
Ed.D. Candidate
The Isabelle Farrington College of Education
Sacred Heart University

Appendix E

Environmental Informant Recruitment Letter

October 28, 2021

Dear Educator,

My name is Tammi Dockett-Wilson, and I am a graduate student in the Isabelle Farrington College of Education at Sacred Heart University. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about social and emotional teaching practices to improve student outcomes. As a researcher, I hope to understand practices that educators utilize to support social emotional learning in the classroom.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview to help determine how best to help educators build capacity to implement social and emotional teaching practices to improve student outcomes. The information gathered in this interview will be used for the completion of a dissertation study towards the award of a graduate degree. All information will be completely confidential, and no identifiable information will be revealed in reports.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may decide to discontinue participation at any time. If you need additional information about the study, please contact me at _____ or email me at dockett-wilsons@mail.sacredheart.edu.

With appreciation,

Tammi Y. Dockett-Wilson
Ed.D. Candidate
The Isabelle Farrington College of Education
Sacred Heart University

Appendix F
Classroom Observation Protocol

Teacher _____ Grade Level _____

Classroom Visitor _____ Month _____

Number of Students in Class (# present, not # enrolled) _____

Content _____

Content/Language Objective

Check off all characteristics that are true about the objective(s) posted in the room

___ Objective(s) missing

___ Objective(s) aligned to activity in classroom

___ Function (how language will be used - key verb)

___ Modality (speaking, listening, reading, or writing)

___ Content (specific content to be learned in lesson)

___ Form (sentence structure, academic vocabulary, grammatical features)

___ Support (graphic organizer, sentence stems, visuals, partners, etc.)

Rigor Level of Objective: Bloom's

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1: Knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> 5: Synthesis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2: Comprehension | <input type="checkbox"/> 6: Evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3: Application | <input type="checkbox"/> No objective seen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4: Analysis | |

Objective(s) Transcribed

Transcribe objective(s) here:

Rigor Level of Student Task

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1: Knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> 5: Synthesis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2: Comprehension | <input type="checkbox"/> 6: Evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3: Application | <input type="checkbox"/> No objective seen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4: Analysis | |

Student Grouping at time of visit

Check off all that are applicable

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whole Class | <input type="checkbox"/> Small group instruction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smaller Groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Instruction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Practice | |

SEL Teaching Practices

Check off all that are applicable

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student-Centered Discipline | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility and Choice | <input type="checkbox"/> Warmth and Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Discussions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection | <input type="checkbox"/> Balanced Instruction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Press and Expectations | <input type="checkbox"/> Competence Building |

Teacher vs. Student Talk *

Select the option that most resembles the teacher to student talk ratio during the visit

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All or almost all talking done by teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> 50/50 split of student and teacher talk opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some students answering questions / talking | <input type="checkbox"/> All or most talking done by students |

Student Engagement *

Choose the option that best describes the level of student engagement during the visit

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All students highly engaged | <input type="checkbox"/> 50% of students engaged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 90% of students engaged | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than half of students engaged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 75% of students engaged | <input type="checkbox"/> Almost no students engaged |

Classroom Environment

Check all that apply

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean and Orderly Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Expectations Posted | <input type="checkbox"/> Disorderly or Messy Environment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Work Posted | <input type="checkbox"/> Rituals and Routines Evident and Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Walls Cluttered and Confusing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Word Wall / Key Vocabulary | <input type="checkbox"/> College Readiness focus apparent | <input type="checkbox"/> Walls Lack Supports for Students |

Progress Monitoring / Assessment

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check for Understanding or Student Assessment during visit | <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Expectations Progress tracker or data wall posted in classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Student or class goals displayed in classroom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of students self-progress monitoring | <input type="checkbox"/> No Assessment or PM evidence during visit | |

Other:

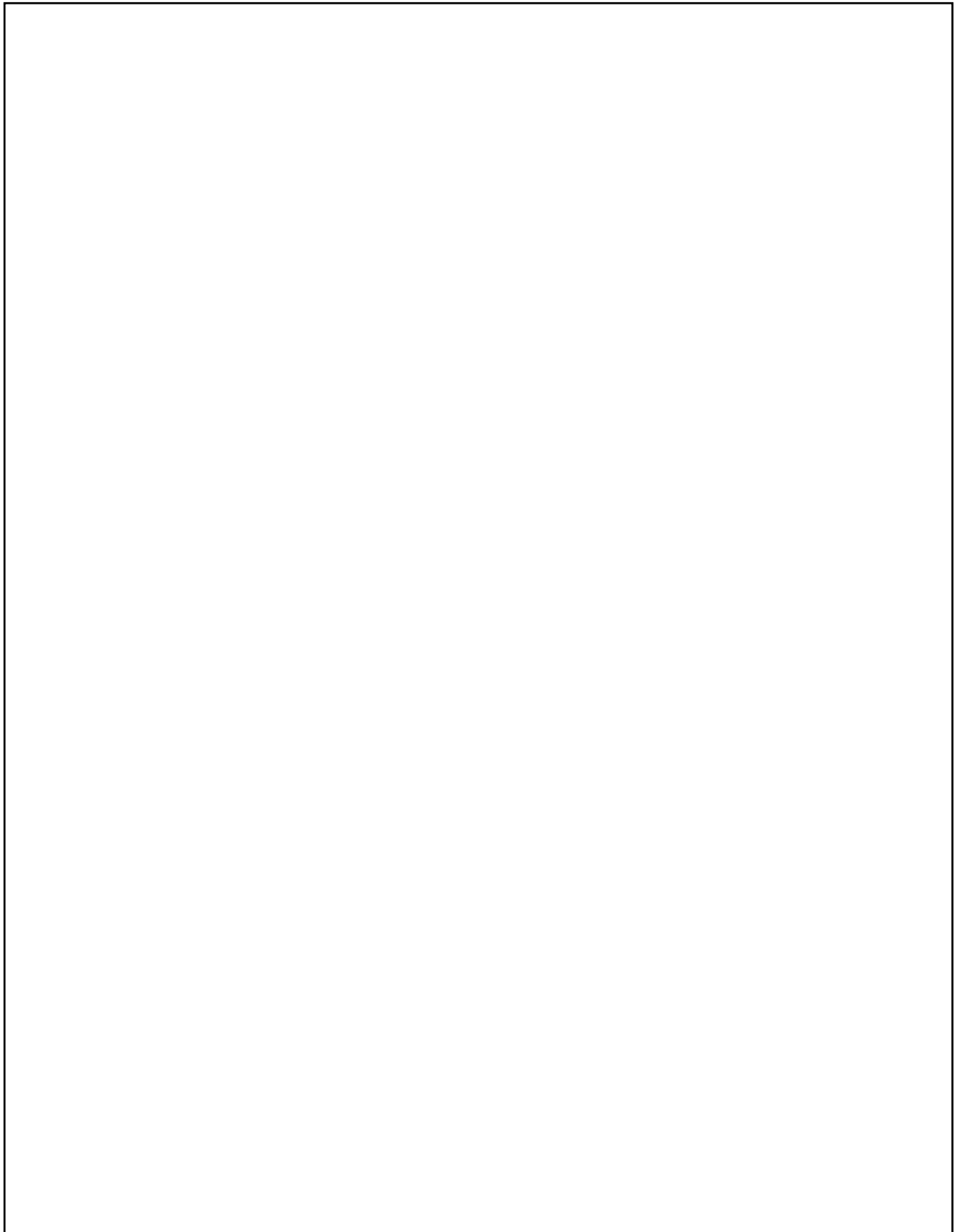
Differentiation Observed

Each of the following is a possible type of differentiation. Check any that are apparent from visit. It is likely that some may go unnoticed during a short visit.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Product - How students demonstrate learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Process - How task is being completed | <input type="checkbox"/> Content - What students are learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment - Setting where students are learning | <input type="checkbox"/> No differentiation observed | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | <input type="text"/> | |

Observational Data

Observer will write down everything that transpires in the classroom. The observer will also script what is said in the classroom. If students' names are used, they will be replaced non-identifiable monikers (student 1, S1, etc.). The focus of the observation should be placed on student-student interactions and student-teacher interactions with particular attention paid to the utilization of social emotional competencies.

Observational Data (*cont.*)

Appendix G

End User Consultation Empathy Interview Protocol

Participant IDNO __ __ __ __	Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Researcher Initials __ __ __
Date __ __ / __ __ / __ __		
Introduction		
I am _____ from _____		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ General purpose of the study ✓ Aims of the interview and expected duration ✓ Who is involved in the process (other participants) ✓ Why the participant's cooperation is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What will happen with the collected information and how the participant/target group will benefit ✓ Any questions? ✓ Consent 	
Warm up [demographic & work history]		
Can I ask some details about you and your job?		
Job Title _____		
Years worked at this school __ __ years __ __ months		
Now I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences as a teacher in this school.		
Domain	Topic and Probes	
Successes	1. Tell me about the success you have had in supporting students' social-emotional skills in the classroom.	
SEL Practices	2. In what way do you implement a variety of practices that influence students' social, emotional, and academic skills?	
Self-Awareness	3. In thinking about your own social and emotional competencies and how those competencies influence your ability to implement the social interaction teaching practices, what strategies do you use when you have a strong emotional reaction (e.g., stress, anger) when implementing social teaching practices?	
Closing		
Is there anything else you think is important about your school climate and culture that we have not talked about?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Summarize ✓ Thank participant ✓ Provide extra information and contacts to participants 		

Appendix H

Professional Learning Plan

Title:

Goal:

Objectives/Outcomes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

PLANNING	ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS DATA	RESOURCES
LEARNING & ACTIVITIES	<p><i>FOCUS</i></p> <p><i>PL FORMAT</i> <input type="checkbox"/> PPT <input type="checkbox"/> Video <input type="checkbox"/> Hands-On/Kinesthetics <input type="checkbox"/> Scenarios</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Auditory w/ Chart Paper <input type="checkbox"/> Book Study <input type="checkbox"/> Lecture</p> <p><i>LEARNER ENGAGEMENT</i></p>	
EVALUATION	EXIT TICKET	

Appendix I

Reflective Coaching Note Protocol (EUCS)

Participant IDNO |__|__|__|__|

Date |__|__|__|__|__|__|

Focus: SEL Teaching Practices (SEL TP)		
Frequency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weekly for 5 weeks Participants <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classroom Teacher <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Researcher	<input type="checkbox"/> Student-Centered Discipline <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility and Choice <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Press and Expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Language <input type="checkbox"/> Warmth and Support <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Balanced Instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Competence Building
I am going to ask you some questions that will assist you with reflecting on what transpired during our observation time together. The reflections shared will guide us in our next steps.		
Question Type / SEL TP	Topic and Probes	
OBJECTIVE <input type="checkbox"/> Student-Centered Discipline <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility and Choice <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Press and Expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Language <input type="checkbox"/> Warmth and Support <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Balanced Instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Competence Building	<p><i>Thinking about your experience during the observation, what important moment(s) do you recall?</i></p> <p>Probes: Did you have to redirect any students? If yes, describe how you redirected the students? If no, why do you think the students remained focused/on-task?</p> <p>Other questions will evolve per the selected SEL Teaching Practices</p>	
REFLECTIVE <input type="checkbox"/> Student-Centered Discipline <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility and Choice <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Press and Expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Language <input type="checkbox"/> Warmth and Support <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Balanced Instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Competence Building	<p><i>Thinking about your experience during the observation, what was most exciting about the lesson and/or teacher-student / student-student interaction(s)?</i></p> <p>Probes: Were you confident in the way the lesson/interactions took place? Where did you have concerns? Where did you feel unsure?</p> <p>Other questions will evolve per the selected SEL Teaching Practices</p>	

<p>INTERPRETIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Student-Centered Discipline <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility and Choice <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Press and Expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Language <input type="checkbox"/> Warmth and Support <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Balanced Instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Competence Building 	<p><i>Thinking about your experience during the observation and your responses thus far, what questions did this raise for you?</i></p> <p>Probes: What kind of changes would you need to make next time?</p> <p>What are you learning about your practice?</p> <p>Other questions will evolve per the selected SEL Teaching Practices</p>
<p>DECISIONAL/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Student-Centered Discipline <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility and Choice <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Press and Expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Language <input type="checkbox"/> Warmth and Support <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Balanced Instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Competence Building 	<p><i>Thinking about your experience during the observation and today's discussion, what will you focus on between now and our next coaching session?</i></p> <p>Probes: What supports do you need from me before our next coaching session?</p> <p>What resources do you need?</p> <p>Other questions will evolve per the selected SEL Teaching Practices</p>
<p>Closing</p> <p>Is there anything else you think is important about your classroom climate and culture that we have not talked about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Summarize ✓ Thank participant ✓ Provide extra information and contacts to participant 	

Appendix J

Process Understanding Interview Protocol

Participant IDNO __ __ __ __ Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female Researcher Initials __ __ __	
Date __ __ __ __ __ __	
Introduction I appreciate the time you afforded me as we worked together for the duration of the research study. As part of our last interaction, I will ask you three questions that will inform me about your understanding of our time together and the research study.	
Domain	Topic and Probes
Comprehension	1. What are some of the benefits of utilizing the teacher practices that support SEL in your learning environment?
Retrieval	2. When implementing the teacher practices that support SEL in your learning environment, what was the most challenging practice to remember or implement? Why?
Judgement	3. How comfortable would you feel introducing or explaining the teacher practices that support SEL to another colleague or parent? Why?
Closing Is there anything else you think is important about your school climate and culture that we have not talked about? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Summarize ✓ Thank participant ✓ Provide extra information and contacts to participants 	

Appendix K

School District Approval

<p><small>District's Mascot removed</small></p>	<h2 style="margin: 0;">School District</h2> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">(District's motto removed)</p>
<p>October 19, 2021</p>	
<p>Superintendent</p>	<p>Tammi Dockett-Wilson</p>
<p>Board of Education</p>	<p>Dear Mrs. Dockett-Wilson:</p>
<p>President</p>	<p>This is to inform you that _____ Public School District has approved the Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice (ISDiP) titled, "An Investigation of the Impact of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Teaching Practices." The main goal of Phase I is to discover the root causes hindering the teachers use of SEL instructional strategies; however, the overall goal of the ISDiP is to provide sustainable research-based approaches supporting the implementation of SEL instructional strategies daily. The ISDiP will occur with elementary teachers in the _____ Public School District assigned to _____ Elementary School and _____ Elementary School campuses that house our pre-kindergarten through sixth grade students. Please understand this approval aligns with the approval from the IRB of Sacred Heart University. We have determined that this project conforms to the district's standards regarding informed consent and FERPA regulations. Please make this letter available upon your first communication with the school principals as it provides assurance that the study meets the district's research policy. Due to the adult focus, students will not participate; however, district approval does not ensure research participation from the faculty given that research subjects have the right not to participate and withdraw from the research study at any point. We understand you will comply with the use of pseudonyms throughout the study.</p> <p>Should you require additional information, please feel free to contact me via email at _____@_____kl2.org or telephone at _____.</p>
<p>Vice President</p>	
<p>Secretary</p>	
<p>Member</p>	
<p>Member</p>	
<p>Caller No.</p>	
<p>P:</p>	<p>Educationally,</p>
<p>F:</p>	<p>_____</p>
<p>An Equal Opportunity Employer</p>	<p>Superintendent of Schools</p>

*Per the confidentiality agreement, removal of all identifiable information transpired.

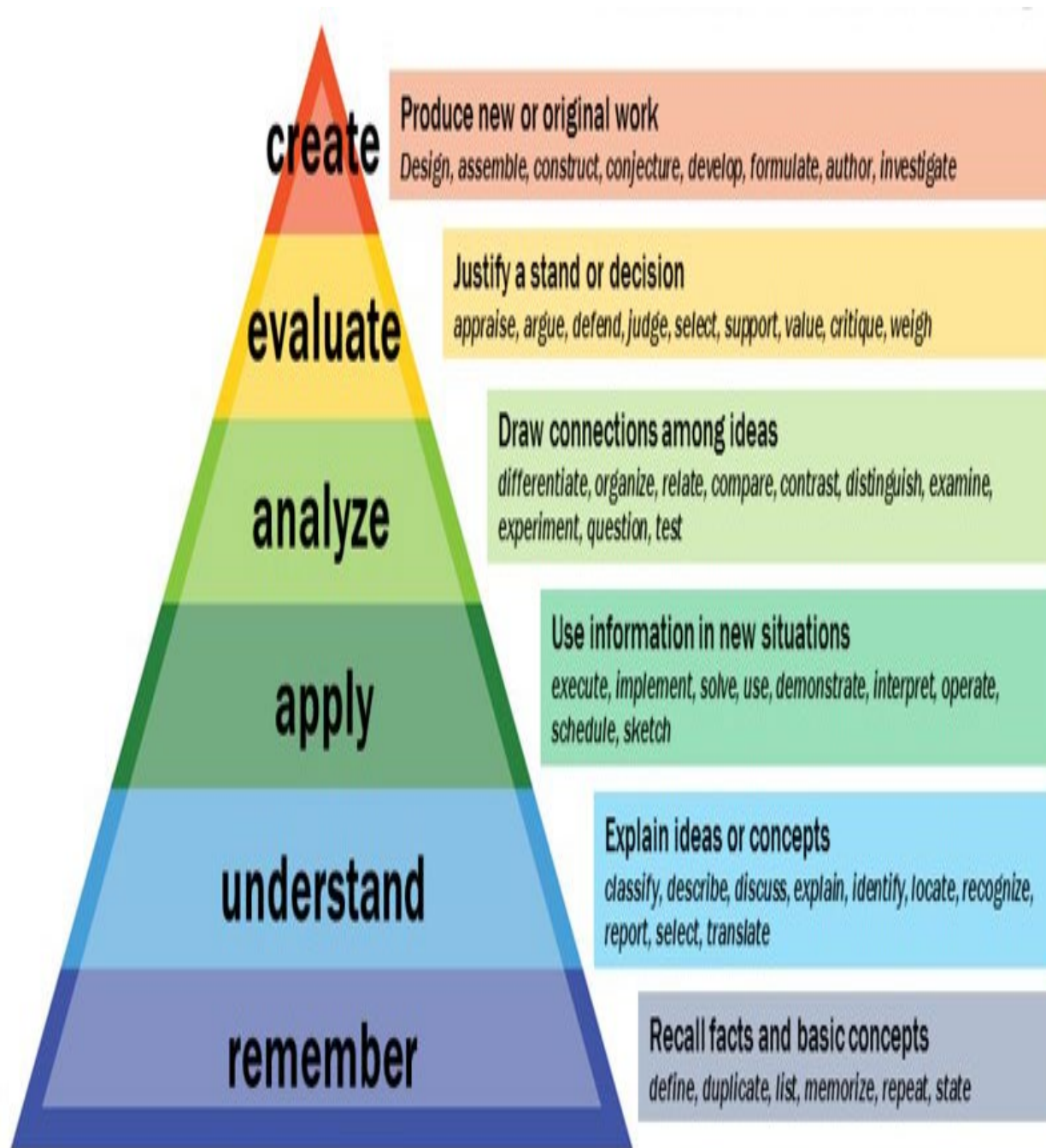
Appendix L

CITI Training Certification

		Completion Date 15-Sep-2019 Expiration Date 14-Sep-2022 Record ID 32848026
This is to certify that:		
Tammi Dockett-Wilson		
Has completed the following CITI Program course:		
Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group) Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Course Learner Group) 1 - Basic Course (Stage)		
Under requirements set by:		
Sacred Heart University, Inc.		
 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative		
Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wa7e2b56b-5f74-49e2-ae76-893173074cb0-32848026		

Appendix M

Bloom's Taxonomy



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Appendix N



Intervention Design Plan



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Aim Statement	
The aim of this intervention is to provide the teachers with a professional learning session and personalized reflective practices to address and build capacity with the teachers' practices that support SEL.	
Driver 1	Driver 2
Professional Development	Practices That Support SEL

Intervention Action Steps	Timeline	Individual or Group Responsible for Implementation	Data Collection Tool	Frequency of Data Collection
Research Participants will complete the AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey	October 27-29, 2021 November 17, 2021	Research Participants	AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey	Pre Post
Based on the AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey, a customized professional learning session (PLS) is created.	October 30, 2021 - November 3, 2021	Researcher	AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey	Once
The PLS will focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Five Core Competencies of SEL • The 10 SEL Teaching Practices • Cooperative Learning (CL) • Reflective Coaching 	November 2021	Researcher		

Intervention Action Steps	Timeline	Individual or Group Responsible for Implementation	Data Collection Tool	Frequency of Data Collection
Present the PLS titled: Social, Emotional Learning (SEL) Teaching Practices and Reflective Coaching  The Why and How	November 15, 2021	Researcher	Exit Tickets	Once
Participate during the PLS titled: Social, Emotional Learning (SEL) Teaching Practices and Reflective Coaching  The Why and How	November 15, 2021	Research Participants	Exit Tickets	Once
Discuss the AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey results and select the appropriate CL strategy that will benefit the students during the instructional process and support the focused SEL teaching practice, which is CL.	November 15, 2021	Research Participants Researcher	AIR Self-Assessment of SEL Survey Results Selected CL Strategy	Once As needed per observations
Conduct classroom observations of cooperative learning strategies implementation	November 29, 2021 - December 16, 2021	Researcher	Classroom Observation Protocol	Weekly
Engage in reflective coaching sessions pertaining to observed classroom observation of cooperative learning strategies implementation	November 29, 2021 - December 16, 2021	Research Participants Researcher	Classroom Observation Protocol Reflective Coaching Note Protocol (EUCS)	Weekly
Participate in Process Understanding Interviews	December 17, 2021	Research Participants Researcher	Process Understanding Protocol	Once

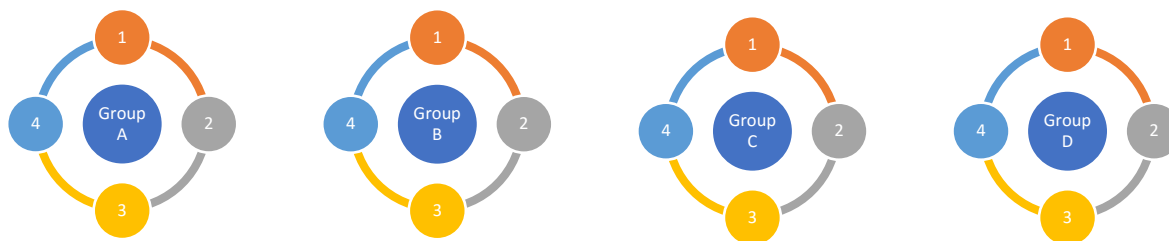
Appendix O

Cooperative Learning Strategies

Numbered Heads Together. Students thrive and learn better when they are engaged and interact with their peers, and numbered heads together (NHT) is one approach that is effective in yielding positive learning gains as they experience openness and learn tolerance (Conderman et al., 2011; Leasa & Corebima, 2017; Lince, 2016; Wora et al., 2017). According to Leasa and Corebima (2017), when the students are open and learning tolerance, they are ascertaining critical skills necessary for them to glean from other views and endure unwavering differences. NHT requires the teacher to assign the students to teams/groups and a number (e.g., 1-4, sometimes up to 5). Once the students have their group placements and number assignments, the teacher poses a question/task. The students discuss/complete the task and make sure each member of the group understands and knows the answer. Next, the teacher calls a number and all the students representing that number will stand and respond for their group.

Illustration 1

Numbered Heads Together



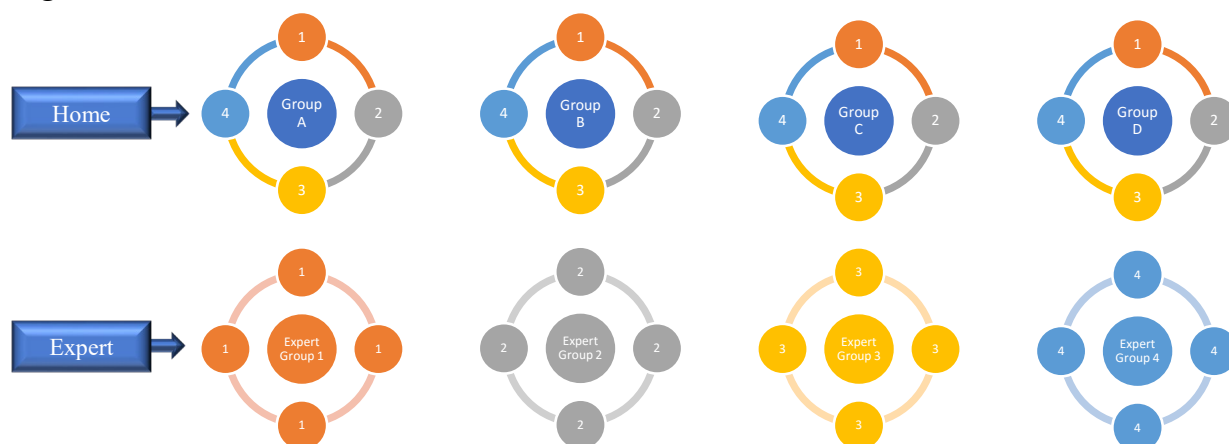
Jigsaw. Nurturing students' interdependence and individual accountability occurs when implementing the jigsaw cooperative learning strategy (Jainal & Shahrill, 2021). Jainal and Shahrill (2021) further articulate interdependence emerges as the students depend on each other to build their learning, and as they strive to do their best to contribute to the learning process, they are engaging in the individual accountability realm of the learning process. At the

completion of the jigsaw strategy, “experts” are the classification the students receive pertaining to the content they learned and shared with their peers (Conderman et al., 2011). Likewise, the jigsaw strategy provides a safe space for prospective teachers to refine their verbal skills as they learn the pedagogical material (Halimah & Sukmayadi, 2019). Karacop and Diken (2017) research reveal students preferred cooperative learning using the jigsaw strategy, which is a student-centered approach, over the traditional teacher-centered teaching methods.

After numbering the students and explaining the task, the students representing the same number from each group travel to a location and form a new group consisting of their number only (i.e., all ones together, etc...). This new group becomes the expert on their assigned content. After the teacher signals time, the expert groups will return to their home position and begin sharing their information with their peers. The teacher is monitoring and facilitating the expert groups and will redirect misconceptions, if necessary. Once the students return to home, the teacher will continue to monitor and facilitate the learning process.

Illustration 2

Jigsaw



Think-Pair-Share or Think-Write-Pair-Share. This cooperative learning strategy is commonly known as T-P-S or T-W-P-S and is useful in strengthening the learners' problem

solving, argument, analysis, compromising, and overall critical thinking skills (Kaddoura, 2013; Karge et al., 2011). T-P-S and T-W-P-S are quick strategies to implement and provides the students with a variety of scaffolds, changing discussion partners, and time to process, talk/write/share their responses with a peer before responding before the entire class (Conderman et al., 2011; Sharma & Saarsar, 2018). Teacher preparation is simple and occurs as follows:

- Pair the students (e.g., a catchy identifier as “peanut butter and jelly”, “A and B”, “left and right”, etc... assists in identifying who will speak first in the sharing process)
- Assign a task (e.g., “Based on the last chapter we read, what do you think will occur next?”, “Discuss with your partner the best way to solve the problem I placed on your table top.”, etc...)
- Allow think time (e.g., a timer will assist with keeping the process moving and managing the students’ conversations)
- After think time, announce which teammate will speak first in the partnerships, and announce how much time each person will have to speak.
- Begin the timer (e.g., the time will vary from seconds to minutes, depending on the task and age of the students)
- State how much time is remaining
- Once the timer alerts, require the teams/partners to switch speakers
- Begin the timer
- State how much time is remaining
- After time expires, randomly call on multiple partnerships to share their discussions or work (e.g., craft sticks can assist with the random selection process)

When using the T-W-P-S cooperative learning strategy, allow the students time to write a response before pairing and proceeding. During the entire process, the teacher is monitoring and listening to the conversations. If needed, redirection occurs.

Illustration 3

Think-Pair-Share

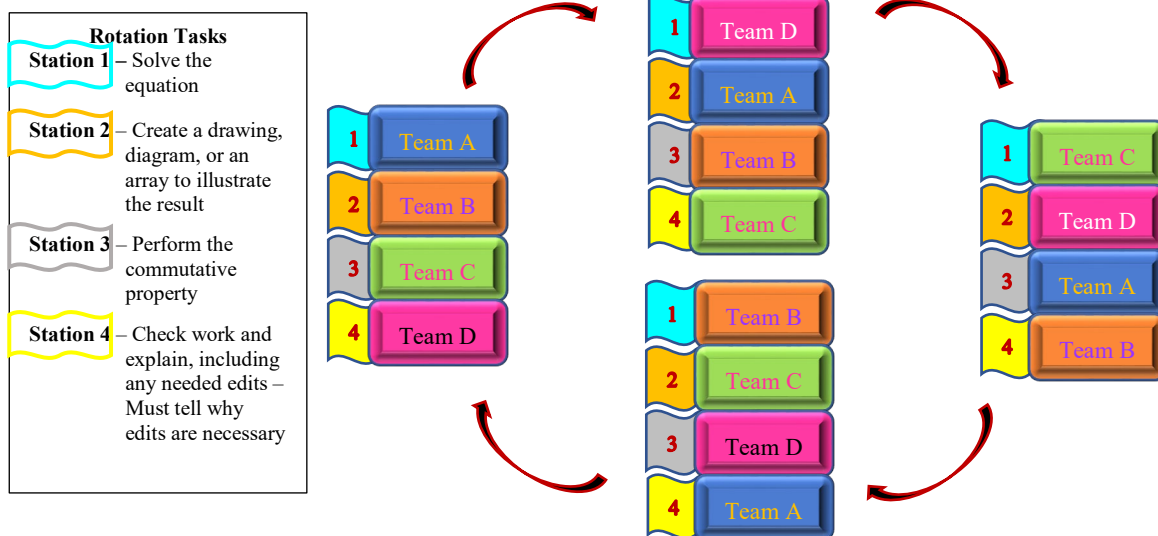


Gallery Walk. Many cooperative learning strategies require the students to get up and move around (i.e., NHT, Jigsaw, etc...) and the gallery walk strategy will do the same with a twist. During the gallery walk strategy the students are up, moving, and participating in the learning process by hearing, discussing, and adding to the thought process of their peers (De Pedro et al., 2016; Rodenbaugh, 2015; Stewart McCafferty & Beaudry, 2017). Beyond having the students up and moving during the learning process, Rodenbaugh (2015) adds the process is fun. De Pedro et al. (2016) believe marginalized students benefit greatly from the use of gallery walks and encourage teachers to be creative when planning and delivering lessons.

The steps for implementing gallery walks are as follows: (a) group the students, (b) explain to the groups the expectations, (c) have tasks and explicit instructions for each rotation, (d) establish a timed period for each rotation (e.g., using a timer assists with managing movement/rotations), and (e) provide different color writing instruments (e.g., pencils, pens, markers, etc...) to aid the students in seeing the prior groups contribution to the learning process.

Illustration 4

Gallery Walk



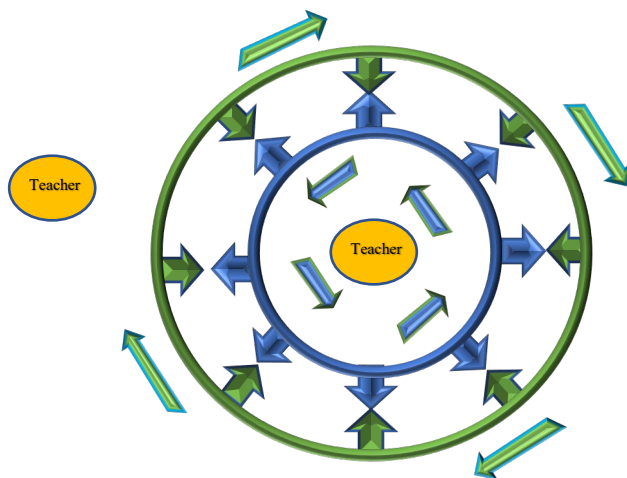
Inside-Outside Circle. Setting the stage for talking is an essential step in ensuring the students know how to engage each other during the conversation (Hadley et al., 2020; Hattie, 2012). Implementing inside-outside circle supports students' oral language development (i.e., speaking and listening skills) as their communication opportunities increases (Fitrianingsih & Sholihah, 2017; Wijaya & Sari, 2017). Also, Fitrianingsih and Sholihah (2017) convey additional benefits from using the inside-outside circle are occasions for kinesthetic learners to blossom, various community-building tasks to materialize, and personalized differentiation to flourish. Similarly, students' writing skills, particularly narrative writing, increase because the students become motivated by hearing the thoughts of different peers, articulating their thoughts and plans for writing before putting pen to paper, and receiving feedback from others (Mulyanah & Ishak, 2021).

Setting up the inside-outside circle requires half the students in the class to form an inside circle facing outward (i.e., the blue arrows). After forming the inside circle, the remaining half of

the students will form an outside circle, with each individual in the outside circle (i.e., the green arrows) facing an inside circle member. Once the partners are in position, the teacher will stand in the middle or on the outside perimeter and voice/state the task for discussion. As the students discuss, the teacher will travel about the circle to monitor the conversations and offer input, if necessary. After calling time, the students will rotate, via the illustration (i.e., outside circle will move clockwise and the inside circle will move counterclockwise) the number of steps the teacher directs. When the students stop moving, they will have a different partner for the next spoken task. The inside-outside circle strategy works with students sitting at tables, too.

Illustration 5

Inside-Outside Circle



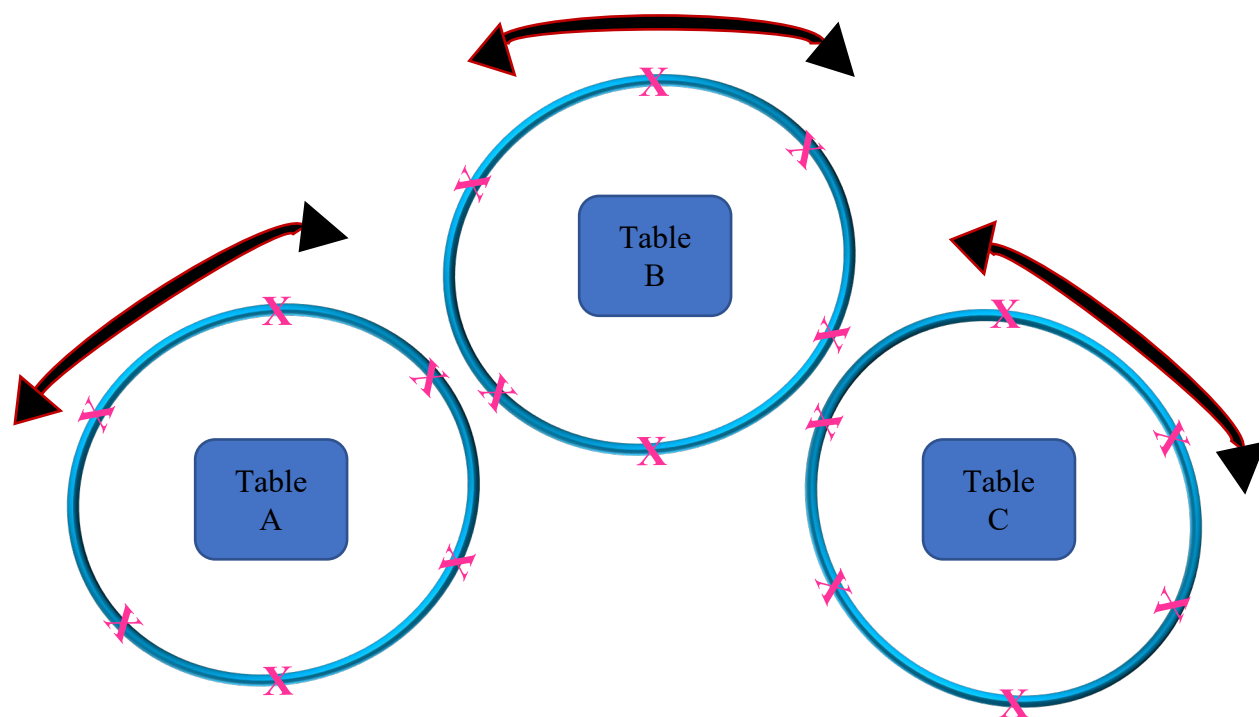
Round Robin. An easy cooperative learning strategy to implement that grants every child's voice the space to speak and contribute to the learning process is round robin (Asari et al., 2017; T. Jones & Sterling, 2011). According to Jones and Sterling (2011) allowing the higher-level ability students to speak first will allow the lower-level ability students an opportunity to hear multiple responses before deciding how they would like to respond. Research show students' positive support for each other and their higher order thinking skills, *HOTS*, (i.e.,

analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing/creating) improve when they engage in the round robin cooperative learning strategy (Asari et al., 2017; Yusmanto et al., 2017). Additionally, Yusmanto et al (2017) report the teachers and students use and response to the round robin cooperative learning strategy improved from cycle 1 to cycle 3, a change from 72.22% to 92.38% for teachers, and 61.85% to 92.77% for students. Each cycle consisted of five meetings (Yusmanto et al., 2017).

The steps for implementing round robin consist of the teacher assigning the students to a table or area in the classroom, presenting a topic of discussion, establishing an individual to begin the conversation at each table/area, monitoring to ensure each student speaks, and listening to learn how well the students are understanding the content and expanding on the learning. Discussions may revolve in a clockwise or counter-clockwise motion.

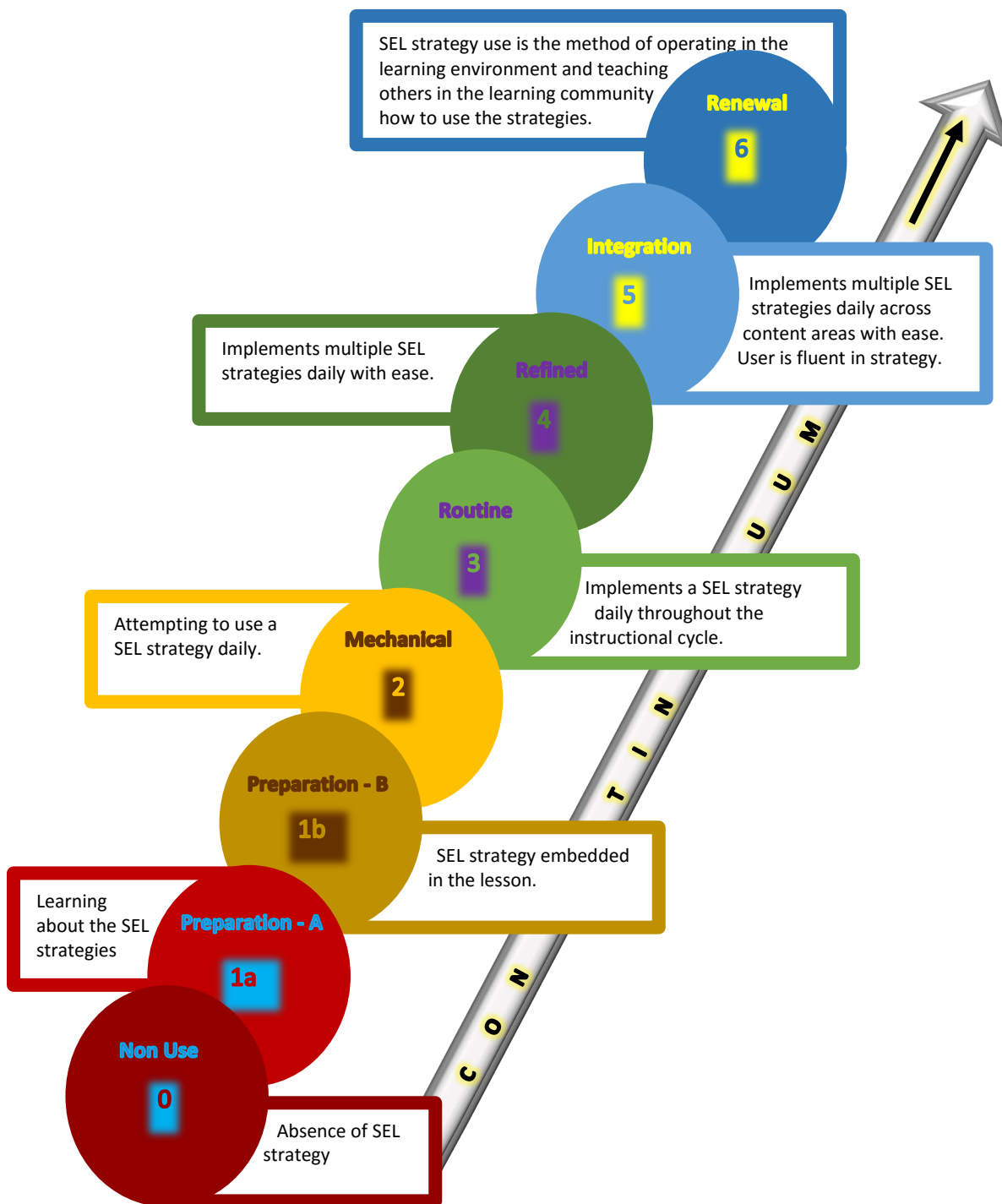
Illustration 6

Round Robin



Appendix P

Levels of Use



Hord, S. M., Rutherford, W. L., Huling-Austin, L., Hall, G. E., & Knoll, M. K. (1987). *Taking charge of change*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Appendix Q**Exit Ticket****Transparent Learning and Feedback for Building Capacity**

Name:

Presenter:

Date:

Today's Learning Objective(s):

On a scale of 1 to 10, how well did you understand today's professional learning session (PLS)?

(1 being not at all and 10 being completely understand)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

List one take-away from today's PLS?

Please list any questions you have?