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K-5 Elementary Alternative Program: A Case Study

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K-5 Elementary Alternative Program: A Case Study

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, concentration in Administrative Endorsement

by

William E. Scheuer IV

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Dr. Virginia Foley, Chair

Dr. John Boyd

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Keywords: alternative education, whole child, student-centered learning, trauma, relationships

ABSTRACT

K-5 Elementary Alternative Program: A Case Study

by

William E. Scheuer IV

The purpose of this case study was to examine how the K-5 elementary alternative program All Students Can Thrive (ASCT) used student-centered learning practices to influence the whole child. There is a lack of research on K-5 elementary alternative programs, such as ASCT, and specifically those that integrate student-centered learning practices to influence the whole child. Literature does not contain universally accepted interventions that are effective in the elementary alternative setting to help students return to the mainstream classroom setting better prepared to display appropriate behaviors when a student is removed from a mainstream classroom setting due to disruptive behaviors. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) has determined five major tenets that measure how educators influence the whole child and those are: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2022). These five tenets will serve as the theoretical framework for this research on the whole child and ASCD will function as the scientific authority on the whole child for the purposes this case study.

Data collection strategies included interviews, field notes, and a document review. Analysis of data occurred in three phases: (a) coding themes from participant responses during interviews (b) analysis of interview field notes (c) document review. The analysis of the case study data was based on the theoretical proposition that educating the whole child involves children being healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2022). The credibility of the analysis

was protected by triangulation of data through the coding of interviews, interview field notes, and a document review.

The results revealed that that all five tenets of the whole child were identified as a common theme or sub-theme from participant responses. Five common themes: (1) Engaged (2) Space to Thrive/Choices (3) Identify Needs/Skills (4) Confidence/Hope (5) Relationship and five sub-themes emerged from the analysis of data: (1) Challenged (2) Supported (3) Safe (4) Healthy (5) Communication.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation was dedicated to my late father, William Edward Scheuer III. My father's relentless love and guidance for almost 12 years provided me with a sound image of what quality leadership looks like, and I've vowed since his passing to live up to his expectations for me and make sure his death is not in vain by turning the pain of his death into a relentless source of fuel for empathy and compassion towards other human beings. I also would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mom, Leigh Foulk Scheuer, whose consistent strength, and support is unwavering, and my aunt Gloria Foulk Oster, whose passion for education and willingness to invest in my career is the only reason I am able to even attempt to achieve a feat such as pursuing my doctorate degree in educational leadership. I would like to acknowledge my sister, Stephanie Scheuer Gillenwater, whose love, guidance, and willingness to challenge has allowed me, in many ways, to grow into the person I am today.

I'd also like to dedicate this dissertation and thank my wife and best friend, Jessica Scheuer, who's never-ending support, encouragement, and reminders of what I am capable of is the reason I am writing this today and not still hopelessly failing, while refusing to admit defeat, as a life insurance salesman. Finally, I'd like to dedicate this dissertation to my largest source of inspiration, my three children, William E. Scheuer V, Skylar Rose Scheuer, and Emilia Joan Scheuer. My boundless love for you and the joy you bring me is the reason I am always continuously pushing myself to be the best version of myself that I can possibly be, but also striving to make this world the best place it can possibly be so your children can inherit a society we can be prouder of.

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personal wisdom and helping me see leadership in a totally new light. I cannot thank Dr. Ginger Christian enough for her continued support as she is willing to provide straight-forward, genuine advice that is always beneficial. I thank Dr. John Boyd for being a tremendous mentor, someone I can speak openly with, and someone who understands and models that kindness and relationships are paramount to everything we do in education. I am forever grateful to Dr. Pamela Scott for her patience as I stumbled through crafting this case study. Her consistent support, wisdom, and guidance were vital to the completion of this study. Paramount to the success of this dissertation Dr. Virginia Foley endured my constant edits, my repeated mistakes, and my constant questions. Her wisdom, directness, encouragement, and relentless support were the reasons I was able to complete this dissertation.

In my education career as a school counselor for Bristol Virginia Public Schools, I'd like to thank my principal, Steve Bonney, who took a chance on hiring a 24-year-old kid out of graduate school with no experience working in schools. My principal for the past 6 years, Jared Rader, has served as an invaluable mentor and friend in more ways than I can mention. Dr. Tim Duncan, Vicie Dotson, Mandi Dennis, Katlyn Bowles, Bo Love, Gary Ritchie, Jennifer Hurt, and Dr. Keith Perrigan are always extremely supportive of me and are wonderful mentors and friends.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

All Student Can Thrive (ASCT) was a K-5 elementary alternative program designed to use student-centered learning practices to meet students where they are academically, social/emotionally, behaviorally and in terms of their ability to self-regulate throughout a typical day. All Students Can Thrive (ASCT) served students for 4 hours from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Students assigned to K-5 elementary alternative programs, such as All Student Can Thrive (ASCT), typically suffer from a lack of appropriate social skills, lack self-regulation skills, and have low self-esteem.

Statement of the Problem

Alternative education is a tool utilized in secondary settings, but little research has been conducted on a K-5 elementary program that used student-centered learning practices to influence the whole child. The students served in ASCT displayed disruptive behaviors which put additional challenges on their path to acquire education and the education of others around them. All the students studied are suspected to have experienced at least one or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). These ACEs are potentially negative environmental factors that may or may not be ongoing and are likely causing ongoing psychological stress (Felitti et al. 1998). Adverse childhood experiences are not rare, and Felitti et al. found long-term associations with adult risk behaviors, health status, and diseases, suggesting increased attention to prevention strategies at all levels of education.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant in the context of exploring the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT and its influence on the whole child. ASCT used student-centered learning

approaches that emphasized students acquiring emotional regulation skills, improving self-esteem, and identifying any sensory needs that may be unique for that child, in addition to focusing on getting a student back on track academically with their grade level peers. Alternative schools have existed in many forms, beginning most notably by Saturn of St. Paul in 1989 (Henning, 1997). Yet, there is limited research regarding K-5 elementary alternative programs, such as ASCT, that used student-centered learning practices and their effectiveness on impacting the whole child. There exists a lack of universal framework consistency among K-5 elementary alternative program models. Students who are not deemed successful in the K-5 elementary school mainstream classroom because of their behavior are at a greater risk for eventually dropping out of school.

Payne and Brown (2017) referenced their findings and suggested that the perceived notion that students who drop out are resistant to learning and conventional norms was false. Instead, Payne and Brown found that more likely it is a confluence of oppressive conditions placed by the school that directly or indirectly pushed students out of school and potentially into the criminal justice system. Payne and Brown used Site of Resilience (SOR) theory to base their conclusions, which explains the identification of young men and women with the term “street,” “street life,” or “the streets.”

These connections are made and are meant to explain personal, social, and economic survival through the bonding of illegal activities (Payne & Brown, 2017). SOR has its roots in structural violence theory and explains how laws, policies, and regulations by institutions and systems interfere with individuals, groups, and communities being able to meet their basic needs. Payne and Brown suggested that students may adopt the street identities to be resilient and cope with an intellectually unsupportive and oppressive public-school environment. ASCT was

specifically created to attempt to identify why students may feel disenfranchised from the public-school environment and work to build connections between students, their teachers, students' families, and the academic curriculum so students can be better prepared to succeed in public school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to examine how the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT used student-centered learning practices to influence the whole child. Literature does not contain universally accepted interventions that are effective in the K-5 elementary alternative setting to help students return to the K-5 elementary mainstream classroom setting better prepared to display appropriate behaviors when a student is removed from a mainstream classroom setting due to disruptive behaviors. Therefore, there is a lack of research on K-5 elementary alternative programs, such as ASCT, and specifically those that integrate student-centered learning to influence the whole child. Disruptive behaviors in the mainstream classroom can only be tolerated to a certain extent before it begins to impede the learning of other children.

Theoretical Framework

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) has identified five major tenets that measure how educators influence the whole child and those are: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2022). These five tenets served as the theoretical framework for this research on the whole child and ASCD functioned as the scientific authority on the whole child for the purposes this case study. The ASCD is a group of educators who advocate for the development of the whole child by inspiring other educators to achieve excellence in learning, teaching, and leading while intentionally focusing on ensuring students

are: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. The ASCD advocates that when students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged they are provided an opportunity to realize their potential in school and in life.

Research Questions

The following research essential question and following sub-questions have guided the research and discussion on this topic and are aligned with ASCD's five tenets for educating the whole child: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2022).

1. Essential Research Question: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of the K-5 elementary program ASCT influence K-5 elementary students to develop as a whole child?

Research Sub-Questions

- a. How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be healthy?
- b. How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students to be safe?
- c. How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be engaged?
- d. How were students supported by academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT?
- e. How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be challenged?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to provide insight for the research.

1. K-5 Elementary Alternative Program: educational programs or systems that are not connected to the mainstream educational program and are intentionally created for the purpose of supporting students with academic or behavioral difficulties in grades K-5.
2. Emotion Regulation: “The ability of an individual to modulate an emotion or set of emotions. Explicit emotion regulation requires conscious monitoring, using techniques such as learning to construe situations differently to manage them better, changing the target of an emotion (e.g., anger) in a way likely to produce a more positive outcome, and recognizing how different behaviors can be used in the service of a given emotional state. Implicit emotion regulation operates without deliberate monitoring; it modulates the intensity or duration of an emotional response without the need for awareness” (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020a).
3. Positive Reinforcement: An increase in the likeliness of occurrence of some behavior because that behavior results in the presentation of a desired stimulus or circumstance (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020b).
4. Student-Centered Learning: wide variety of education programs, academic-support strategies, instructional approaches, and learning experiences that are designed to address the specific learning interests, aspirations, needs, or cultural backgrounds of an individual student or a group of students (Edglossary.com, 2014).

5. Trauma: an extremely challenging or uncomfortable experience which creates mental or emotional stress, typically for an extended period (The Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, 2022)
6. Whole Child: schools educating students to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged to set standards for long-term success (ASCD, 2022).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

1. Only six legal guardians were able to participate out of the total 16 legal guardians with students served by ASCT. 10 legal guardians chose not to participate
2. The study addressed only with K-5 elementary students attending Bristol Virginia Public Schools during August 2019 - December 2021 school years.
3. The researcher conducting interviews in the study was the professional school counselor in the school that housed ASCT; therefore, the researcher was the professional school counselor of the students in the program and may have worked with the students in some capacity in the past. It cannot be ignored that those experiences were potentially influential in the analysis process.
4. An observation of students actively in the program was not conducted due to the ASCT program ending in December of 2021.

Delimitations

1. This study only examined how the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT influenced students through the lens of ASCD's definition of the whole child.

2. The study focused on a K-5 elementary alternative program. Influences alternative programs have on educating the whole child in Grades 6-12 were not considered as part of the study.
3. The influences ASCT had on the whole child were limited to being researched with qualitative research data only.
4. ASCT support staff members were not interviewed for the purposes of this case study.

Chapter Summary

The main purpose of the case study was to examine components of the K-5 elementary program ASCT and how they influence the whole child. Acquiring emotional regulation skills, improving self-esteem, and identifying sensory needs are three of the central goals of ASCT as well as skills and interventions acquired while in ASCT that could then be transferable back over to the mainstream classroom. Chapter 1 explains the purpose of this study, the research questions being assessed, the significance of the study, the definition of a few important terms, and overview of the limitations that threaten the validity of the study. Chapter 2 covers relevant literature that helped guide the research on alternative schools and allowed me to build upon what others have already discovered. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and overall design of the case study. Chapter 4 presents the data including interviews, field notes, and a document review. Chapter 5 contains conclusions made from all three data sources: interviews, field notes, and a document review to create a triangulated analysis.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

Introduction

Alternative school programs exist across the country and are designed and implemented in many ways. This literature review was conducted to provide the researcher and the reader a better understanding of the characteristics of and the development of programs intended to meet the academic, social, behavioral, and sensory regulatory needs of students who have experienced ACEs. Alternative school philosophies vary, and each alternative school program has unique obstacles to consider depending on the philosophies of the stakeholders in that school district and the needs of the students being served. The conceptual framework for this case study was grounded in examining the influences student-centered learning practices had on the whole child.

History of Alternative Programs

A student-centered learning approach to alternative education began in the 1940s when an 8-year study was conducted and found thematic, learner-directed styles of teaching were as effective, possibly more effective, than traditional teacher-directed, disciplined-centered instruction (Aikin, 1942). With the emergence of the impact of humanistic psychology in school functioning, educators in the 60s and 70s were able to begin to understand that each student is a unique learner with unique needs (Henning, 1997).

A declared war on poverty in the 1960s spurred the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, led by President Lyndon Johnson, and the public school system was a front-line attack on poverty, replacing the emphasis on excellence with an emphasis on the humanistic goal of equity (Lange & Sletten, 2002). This impacted education both inside and outside of public education. When it came to public education, the creation of

Open Schools was an initial innovation that came from this movement. Open Schools allowed parents, students, and teachers to choose their curriculum, promoting autonomy, doing away with competitive testing, and implementing a child-centered approach.

There were several original examples of alternative programs. Lange and Sletten (2002) mentioned some examples of early alternative programs were Schools without Walls, Schools within a School, Multicultural Schools, Continuation Schools, Learning Centers, Fundamental Schools, and Magnet Schools. Schools without Walls was a school which focused on community-based learning, and individuals within the community were asked to come aid in educating the students. Schools within a School were formed to identify groups of high school students who had specific educational needs. Schools within a School worked to create smaller communities where students felt a sense of belonging, and their individual interests were considered through the education process. Open Schools eventually influenced the creation of public alternative options at all three levels of education.

Multicultural Schools were intended to intentionally integrate culture and ethnicity into the curriculum, and often had diverse student bodies, some of which catered to a specific ethnic group (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Continuation Schools were created for students who were not performing up to the same academic expectations of their peers and provided the opportunity for more individualized, less competitive instruction. Researchers today often find alternative school models today like those of Continuation Schools.

Learning Centers were established to specifically meet the unique academic needs of individual students by implementing special resources such as vocational education (Lange & Sletten, 2002). We see examples of these today as well. Fundamental Schools were created with an emphasis on a back-to-basics approach which was a reaction to the lack of academic rigor that

was perceived to exist in Free Schools. Fundamental Schools put a heavy emphasis on restoring, from their perspective, high academic expectations for students. Magnet Schools were formed from the desire to promote racial integration by offering a curriculum emphasizing themes meant to attract diverse groups of students from an array of cultural and racial backgrounds. Magnet Schools are very popular today in many areas.

The prevalence of alternative school options could not exist without the intentional efforts of many to ensure this endeavor. In the 1970s, the International Consortium on Options in Public Education strongly advocated for the alternative school approach to education (Raywid, 1981). This group was made up of leaders who felt compelled to increase public access to alternative programs. In the 1980s the perception of alternative schools and how they were described began to narrow. Many of the first Open Schools did not fit the new definition. Alternative school options went from being more student-centered learning and open-oriented in the 1970s to being more academically remedial in the 1980s (Lange & Sletten, 2002). This shift instigated an increase in the Continuation School alternative model, but also a decrease in innovations.

The 1980s were characterized by alternative programs that were more geared towards the students that were disrupting the mainstream classroom or simply failing their classes (Lange & Sletten, 2002). This particular focus was attributed to a decline in innovations, such as Open Schools, the conservative climate of the 1980s, and the growing number of students who were failing their classes. We see many of these types of programs today; the 1980s marked a shift from collective decision-making to focusing solely on educating basic literacy and math elements (Raywid, 1981).

Many alternative programs today work to serve smaller student populations (Arnove & Strout, 1980; Barr, 1981; Bryk & Thum, 1989; Morley, 1991; Natriello et al., 1990; Tobin & Sprague, 1999). Many alternative programs today also emphasize one-on-one teacher and student interaction (Arnove & Strout, 1980; Barr, 1981; Tobin & Sprague, 1999). Creating a supportive environment is another emphasis of modern alternative programs (Arnove & Strout, 1980; Bryk & Thum, 1989; Case, 1981; Tobin & Sprague, 1999). Providing opportunities for students to make decisions and allow flexibility is another component of modern alternative programs (Barr, 1981; Natriello et al., 1990). In addition, modern alternative school programs provide opportunities for successes that are relevant to the student's future (Arnove & Strout, 1980; Barr, 1981; Natriello et al., 1990).

During the 1990s alternative schools were separated in three categories, Type I, Type II, and Type III (Raywid, 1994). Those three categories were meant to be a way to better clarify the philosophy and motivation behind certain alternative school programs. Type I alternative schools were schools where students and families chose their programs or curriculums. Examples of Type I alternative schools would be Magnet Schools where students focused on a particular subject area or areas. Type II alternative schools were places where students went before being expelled from school. These alternative school options were a last effort from the public school to serve the student due to academic or behavioral challenges. Type III alternative school programs were created with a remediation focus on either academic or social/emotional learning.

A fourth type was proposed as a hybrid of combining elements of all three types (Lange & Sletten, 1995). These hybrid models provided some elements of choice, as well as remediation and innovation to provide instruction to students who have not been successful in their

mainstream classroom environment. Despite these four types, it is difficult to create a comprehensive description of alternative school programs because of the varying nature and complexity of each program (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) and the Alternative Network Journal have been working to define and identify alternative school programs across the country. Even with these organizations, with the different perspectives and data collection procedures it makes it difficult to establish consensus perspectives on the nature of alternative schools because they are always changing.

The populations of students served by alternative education programs has varied significantly over the past 60 years; however, it has grown to be more specialized since the 1980s (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The work to specialize alternative programs has caused an emphasis on experimenting with different ideas and innovations. Barr (1981) felt that alternative schools were an exciting laboratory where unique and risky experiments take place and are analyzed. A popular researched population of students, in terms of alternative school programs, includes those that have dropped out or are at-risk for dropping out (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Research by Porowski et al. (2014) indicates that 43 states, including Washington D.C., have formally defined alternative education. Consensus from these definitions implies that terms such as target population, setting, services, and structure should be included. Behavior problems were found to be the leading factor for serving students. Thirty-five alternative programs were also found to most commonly provide academic instruction that mirrored regular instruction in 21 states. Digest of Education Statistics (2019) reported that the number of students in alternative programs has increased from roughly 130,000 in the early 1990s to almost 650,000 in 2019.

Whole Child

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Design (ASCD) has determined five major tenets for educating the whole child: healthy, safe, engage, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2002). “Healthy” is described as a school culture that supports and reinforces the health and well-being of each student through a student health education curriculum and instructional support. Each student’s health and well-being are reinforced by addressing the physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of each child’s health.

A school’s physical education schedule, curriculum, and instructional support should reinforce the health and well-being of each student by focusing on lifelong fitness knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills (ASCD, 2022). According to the ASCD staff member health and well-being should be supported as well. Health is also facilitated by collaboration with parents and local community partners as well as by integrating health and well-being into professional development, curriculum, and assessment practices. Realistic goals for student and staff health must be based on valid data and sound science. The ASCD says students and staff members should have access to health, mental health, and dental services. Finally, the ASCD says student health can be promoted by educating students on healthy eating patterns.

The ASCD (2022) stated that students learn best when in an environment that is emotionally and physically safe. This includes the building, grounds, playground equipment, as well as transportation vehicles, all meeting safety and environmental standards that have been established. The ASCD stated that schools should be attractive, have good traffic flow, including for those with special needs, and also structurally sound.

The ASCD (2022) also stated that physical, emotional, academic, and social climates should all be student-centered, friendly, and safe. The ASCD further stated that all students should feel valued, respected, cared for, and motivated to learn. Staff, students, and family members are involved in the establishment and maintenance of classroom behavioral expectations, rules, and routines to improve any problematic behavior.

The ASCD (2022) determines a safe education environment through teaching and modeling healthy emotions and providing opportunities to practice social/emotional learning. The ASCD stated that schools should uphold social justice and equity in addition to ensuring that climate, curriculum, and instruction all reflect high student expectations. Finally, the ASCD stated that academic and behavioral interventions should always be based on the understanding of the child's developmental and learning ability.

The ASCD (2022) described ways students may stay actively engaged in learning and be connected to the school and broader community. Schools should apply active learning strategies, offering a range of opportunities for students to contribute to and learn inside the community, as well as policies and climate that reinforce citizenship and civic behaviors by staff, family members, and students. The ASCD also defined schools that engage the whole child as including curriculum-related experiences that are more hands on and experiential, such as field trips. The ASCD further discussed that for students to be actively engaged, curriculum and instruction should be combined with a wide array of choices in activities that reflect each student's individual goals and learning profiles.

Curriculum and instruction should promote students' understanding of the real-world in addition to the global relevance of learned content (ASCD, 2022). According to ASCD schools developing the whole child will also have staff work closely with students to monitor and guide

progress. Schools who are engaging the whole child will offer age-appropriate responsibilities through effective decision-making, goal setting, and time management as well as responsible environmental habits such as trash management, recycling, and sustainable energy.

The ASCD (2022) said that all each student should have access to personalized learning and be supported by qualified, caring educators. In addition, learning should be personalized including having flexible time to meet academic and social goals, and teachers should use a range of assessments to monitor student progress, provide quick feedback, and adjust lessons to maximize progress. The ASCD also stated that students are supported when schools ensure that student-adult relationships are always promoting academic and personal growth for the student.

The ASCD (2022) clearly stated that students should have counselors and other emotional support personnel who are available to help students whenever a need may arise. Also, school personnel should be welcoming and inclusive to all students and families. The ASCD expects schools to use multiple methods of communication to ensure all stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds clearly understand the school's vision, mission, goals, activities, and opportunities for students. For families to be supported, the ASCD requires schools to facilitate families' understanding of what community and school-based resources their children can benefit from. Another component of ensuring the whole child is supported is having every member of the school staff properly trained and licensed. All staff should model prosocial behavior on a consistent basis.

The ASCD (2022) said each student should be challenged academically and prepared for success in future endeavors by first having access to challenging and comprehensive curriculum, instruction, and assessments in each content area. Curriculum and instruction should provide opportunities for students to master technology proficiency and practice reasoning skills, critical-

thinking, and problem-solving. Every school should use both qualitative and quantitative information to determine a student's academic and personal growth as well as to establish goals for the future. The ASCD emphasized that each school should work with families to ensure all students know the connection between education and lifelong success.

The ASCD (2022) also stated that to challenge the whole child, schools should incorporate evidence-based practices into curriculum and instruction to prepare students for citizenship, education, and careers. Importantly, schools should provide, monitor, and assess growth in extracurricular, co-curricular, and community-based programs which challenge students to experience situations that will mirror those as a citizen, in higher education, or in their career. The ASCD also advocates for students to be challenged to develop a global awareness and be competent in understanding other cultures. Finally, the ASCD stated that students should be provided challenging opportunities to learn technology through cross-curricular practices.

Addressing Dropouts

The desire to innovate began to document the growing need for educating students who had dropped out of school or prevent students who were at greater risk for dropping out from doing so (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Major research on the effectiveness of dropout prevention alternative programs began in the 1980s (Duttweiler, 1995; Dynarski & Wood, 1997; Natriello et al., 1990; Newmann, 1981; Pitman & Haughwout, 1987). In the early 1990s, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) began to identify predictors of dropout and found that more needed to be understood between student-adult relationships and their specific impact.

Beginning in the 2000s, Lange and Slutten (2002) started to examine dropouts through a multi-faceted lens, implementing elements of home, school, and community. This multi-faceted research approach helped identify several key characteristics that make up successful alternative school programs: flexible programs with high expectations, an emphasis on care and concern, and small school size (Duttweiler, 1995; Marder, 1992, Natriello et al., 1990, Wehlage & Rutter, 1987). Wehlage and Rutter (1987) found evidence from case studies suggesting alternative school programs consist of caring relationships and personalized instruction that has clear, demanding, but achievable expectations are more effective.

The most associated challenges students face who are referred for alternative school programs include academics, relationships with faculty and peers, and school size (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The tendency to drop out has been found to be most strongly predicted by poor academic achievement before the 10th grade (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000). Lange and Sletten (2002) suggested the interactions students have with school personnel can cause a student to feel disenfranchised from the school system.

Natriello et al. (1990) suggested that there could be other factors at play as well. Evidence suggests student and school failure can be partially associated with a mismatch in student skills and interests and the academic program of the school. Lange and Sletten (2002) further suggested students who are identified as at-risk should have programs that are tailored to fit their interests and needs. Barr and Parrett (2002) recommended that students who are failing be moved into a multi-grade level classroom that focuses on an accelerated curriculum for mastery of standards and attention to individual needs.

In terms of feeling disenfranchised from the school and more likely to dropout, the literature suggests that students who are at-risk are strongly impacted by a school climate of

rejection from teacher, peers, or both (Natriello et al., 1990; Wehlage & Rutter, 1987; Wehlege et al., 1989). A sense of caring from school personnel will encourage students to persist when paired with achieving academic success and will result in increased self-esteem (Arnové & Strout, 1980). Lange and Sletten (2002) found that elements of alternative schools that best created results for students involved teachers holding students highly accountable for their work and an increase in the number of faculty involved. Lange and Sletten also found persistence with students and overall optimism about their potential were beneficial as well. Finally, Lange and Sletten found small class sizes, one-on-one relations, autonomy, flexibility, and control to be additional elements that best created results for students.

School size and class size have been shown to have impacts on students as well. Larger schools are statistically more likely to have higher dropout rates and Pittman and Houghtwout (1987) found that the benefits of diverse academic programs, by themselves, may not be sufficient to outweigh bigger schools having higher dropout rates. Bryk and Thum (1989) reported that smaller schools allow for increased teacher engagement which is linked to a reduction in violence and is thought to also decrease discipline problems. Smaller schools can create more of a community environment. Bryk and Thum (1989) and Natriello et al. (1990) suggested smaller alternative settings promote a sense of membership and increased engagement for students.

Students have consistently communicated that their reasoning for applying increased effort and accountability in their alternative school setting was directly linked to a sense of belonging to a community and how it was the warm, caring environment that made them truly feel like members of that community (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Similarly, students have left their old school and transitioned into an alternative school setting due to a lack of support and not

enough quality relationships in their original school. Additionally, students identified as having a disability are more likely to drop out than their peers who are not identified as having a disability.

Griffiths et al. (2019) found the rate of students who respond to Tier 1 interventions in alternative programs is lower than the rate of students who respond to Tier 1 instruction in mainstream classrooms (80%), therefore; specific interventions will need to be put in place and a lower teacher-to-student ratios would be needed to support students and the personal challenges they each must overcome to succeed in an educational setting. Griffiths et al. also found the ability of a school to recognize a student who is not receptive to Tier 1 instruction and does not seem to connect with adults in the building is paramount in ensuring that student is not put in situations where they are more likely to act out behaviorally if identification of strengths and weaknesses and intervention does not occur.

Elements of Alternative Schools

When looking further into the elements of effective alternative programs who serve students with disabilities Benz et al. (2000); Fuller and Sabatino, (1996); and Marder (1992), found that relationships with trusted adults, access to mental health support services, a curriculum that focuses on living and vocational skills, high expectations and accountability, and the creation of educational and/or career goals that provide an opportunity to link to future opportunities have all been found to be the most impactful. The same elements are also elements of many alternative schools, which is why alternative school settings are sometimes effective in serving the needs of students who have been identified as having a disability (Lange & Sletten, 2002). A set of concerns to consider as well is the nature of high-risk behaviors by students in alternative programs.

Grunbaum et al. (2000) reported students being served in alternative school settings were much more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors such as weapon use, unprotected sex, drug use, drunk driving, and suicide attempts than students who attended traditional high schools. These implications go even further. Blum et al. (2000) reported students who struggle academically have been found to be more at-risk for adverse health behaviors, which in turn means that students' failing is not just an educational crisis, but also a health crisis as well because the two are intertwined.

Choice and flexibility are paramount elements in why students reported the reasoning for displaying fewer disruptive behaviors in alternative settings as compared to their peers who have been served in traditional classroom settings (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Further analysis of this research allows understanding that students felt more comfortable and as confidence grew, overall academic performance and effort increased. Lange and Sletten noticed that students with higher self-esteem were more readily able to carry over their newly applied behaviors than students who exhibited more depression and somatic complaints.

Smith et al. (1981) researched high student satisfaction rates and attributed these to smaller school size, flexibility, and relationships with teachers consisting of care and concern. Smith et al. also reported that students in alternative programs had higher levels of satisfaction and self-esteem when compared to traditional school peers. Although alternative programs often create these high student satisfaction and self-esteem rates, they do not always correlate to improvements in academic achievement. The U.S. Department of Education studied dropout prevention programs and discovered students reported they gave their best effort when teachers challenged them while also proving to the students that they genuinely cared about their well-being (Dynarski & Gleason, 1998).

Thomas (2017) studied multiple alternative programs across multiple districts and realized that the leadership involved in running each program and the people who directly worked with the students were extremely important. Punitive alternative learning programs (ALP) were found to be much less effective. Therefore, the leadership of the ALP is ideally aligned with teachers who desire to invest time and energy in a relationship with students and focus on rewarding and celebrating academic and behavioral successes. Thomas also mentioned the tendency for school districts to place teachers who are not as skilled, have been reprimanded, or have little to no experience. This is one of the major challenges ALPs face and this research also discussed how North Carolina has specifically put measures in place to ensure teachers are not getting below adequate evaluation scores and working in ALPs, a model that is suggested to be adopted nationally.

Disruptive Behaviors

Yoder and Williford (2019) discussed the importance of teachers establishing a healthy relationship from the very beginning with their students, especially in preschool where they are getting their first impressions of school and the structured learning processes. Teachers can, at times, place unrealistic expectations on students or display a low frustration tolerance in terms of attention skills and developmental ability. Yoder and Williford recommended that more attention needs to be given towards encouraging teachers to consider a variety of external and internal factors that may be working against a student and causing them to display disruptive behaviors.

Ervin et al. (2018) examined behavior skills training (BST) and found that students with emotional behavioral disorders (EBDs) responded positively to a system that rewards positive behavior in the classroom instead of only punitively focusing on addressing negative behaviors. Ervin et al. involved model students displaying the desired behaviors in front of peers. Students

with EBDs were not the models and therefore were not the recipients of the reinforcing elements of BST because they were not directly engaged in the behaviors, only witnessed them. Despite this, BST was found to be impactful. It can be inferred that if each student in the classroom were directly taught BST it would have a direct positive impact on all students, including those with EBDs.

Often when a student is homeless, they do not want to talk about it, to the point that no adult in the school may ever be aware of how challenging their circumstances truly are (Ingram et al., 2017). Also, what may lie under the surface for some students may be their hyperactivity or inattentiveness and their lack of strategies to control this tendency. ADHD can cause distractibility in the classroom, poor grades, low test scores, and increased discipline referrals (Barkley, 2016).

Golden (2017) reported that relationships are vital to learning and teachers, especially in alternative settings, are most likely to see results with students if they create a collaborative dynamic where students have some form of autonomy over their curriculum. Golden also reported that teachers spend an enormous amount of time attempting to get students to listen, stay focused, and apply consistent work ethic. In fact, it is estimated approximately half of the teacher's time is spent dealing with redirecting students to the task at hand, and half of public-school teachers do not stay in the field of education more than 5 years (Griffith et al., 2019). Because many young teachers lack experience and training in behavior management, frustration levels can elevate quickly for less experienced teachers, and they may not always have the skill set to effectively deal with a student who is being defiant or non-compliant, making that all-important relationship sometimes difficult to develop between student and teacher.

Shin and Ryan (2016) found that teachers play a very specific role in not only the level of disruptive behaviors in their classroom, but also the degree to which students alter their behavior to match their friends'. Shin and Ryan reported that classrooms with high levels of emotional support were less likely to have disruptive behaviors. Over time Shin and Ryan found that classrooms with less emotional support would have increases in disruptive behaviors over the course of the semester.

Shin and Ryan (2016) also found that students were significantly more likely to be influenced by a peer's behavior in classrooms with low levels of emotional support from the teacher, compared to students who were in classrooms with high levels of teacher emotional support. Thus, teacher emotional support can act as a buffer to limit negative peer pressure. Bursztyn et al. (2017) described that each school fits a particular peer culture of either one that rewards ability "cool to be smart" or one that stigmatizes effort "smart to be cool." Thus, depending on the type of peer culture that exists at a particular school, an administrations' efforts to increase student achievement could be counterproductive if they are not aware of the type of peer culture that exists.

Bursztyn et al. (2017) found that students being sorted based on ability level was likely to be the most impactful in limiting the stigma of lower performance when students are matched with other students who are similar in ability level. When ability levels are widely varied and poor performance clearly makes this obvious, the difference in ability levels becomes transparent. When students with already low self-esteem perceive a vast difference in ability level amongst their academic peers, it can create anxiety in students making it difficult to physically sit in class, make them susceptible to bullying, cause them to act out, or disengage from the school process all together by not giving effort or simply not showing up.

Xu et al. (2019) examined the impact of students who have a higher frequency of disciplinary problems, spend less time in after-school studying, and have repeated a grade level and found that those students do tend to negatively influence the cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes of students who have not been identified as having pre-existing disciplinary misbehaviors or poor relations to the school itself and have not repeated a grade level. Teachers do not often get to choose their students. Because of this, Xu et al. says teachers would be best suited to provide emotional support to students to decrease the likelihood that students will be negatively influenced by peers in the classroom who may be struggling with disruptive behavior.

Trauma

There have been four potential categories of traumatic stress reactions identified that can negatively impact a person's ability to function when diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): avoidance of any reminders of their trauma, negative changes in thoughts and moods, intrusive thoughts and feelings of re-experiencing the traumatic event, and changes in arousal reactivity, such as hyperarousal or feeling numb (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). When a person is exposed to trauma, it activates a person's limbic system and most executive functioning is occurring in the brain stem, preventing the frontal lobe, which is responsible for impulse-control, decision-making, and learning, from being utilized (Pickens & Tschopp, 2017). When a person is exposed to trauma for long periods of time it keeps the limbic system in constant activation, which prevents the frontal lobe from being accessed. Children who are constantly in a state of heightened arousal may struggle to sit down, pay attention, focus, learn, and may display sensory needs that are unique. These behaviors are at times misdiagnosed

in children as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), when in fact they are a result of PTSD.

Trauma negatively impacts student outcomes and should be addressed by implementing positive education and weaving it into intentional trauma-informed approaches (Brunzell, 2017). The first step towards offering the support children need, who have been exposed to trauma, is helping them feel safe at school and providing them opportunities to establish unique relationships, modeling alternative forms of relationships (Jennings, 2019). Lack of self-control is a symptom of trauma; therefore, educators can begin to understand children and the support they need by understanding that their disruptive behaviors that are interrupting learning are, at times, a product of their past experiences or current ongoing experiences.

Pickens and Tschopp (2017) discussed the devastating impact trauma has on children and how trauma can profoundly change behavior, as responses to trauma vary greatly. Trauma-Informed Classrooms (TICs) are mentioned as a response to the need for teachers to better understand and intentionally prepare for students to act out in certain ways because of trauma. When a student struggles to self-regulate or is triggered by their trauma, problem-solving and stress management skills can be intentionally used, if taught and modeled by the teacher in difficult moments, students can then begin to see a teacher as an ally. Pickens and Tschopp also referenced that TICs provided access to vital mental health supports and other health support systems in the community, promoted school connectedness, helped students feel a sense of control, provided a training system that allowed teachers to appropriately respond to trauma, and helped students find hope and meaning from pain and suffering. Pickens and Tschopp (2017) also discussed the importance of educators being aware of the warning signs of students who have experienced traumatic stress such as substance use, regressive behavior, over-sexualized

behavior, self-harm behavior, aggressive behavior, shame and excessive guilt, zoning out/dissociation, nightmares flashbacks, numb or very little emotional feeling/expression, joining a gang or carrying a firearm, feeling excessively depressed, misreading social situations, and avoiding stressful situations.

Teachers can best support students who have been impacted by trauma by modeling respectful interactions with all people whom the teacher encounters (Jennings, 2019). Students often will see a teacher be disrespectful to another student or adult and think that they are potentially next in line to be disrespected. It is also impactful for teachers to facilitate the growth of supportive peer relationships and reduces the likelihood of an aggressive or combative classroom climate. Mitigating aggression, supporting those who feel isolated, preventing students from creating status extremes, and supporting positive behavior are strategies teachers should use according to Jennings. The best ways to not allow for status extremes is for teachers to provide low-status children opportunities to receive recognition or reducing the importance or status in general.

Another notable finding was that teachers who support friendships, particularly with the most isolated students, created a stronger sense of community among those students (Jennings, 2019). If a teacher is disrespectful to a student, they are unconsciously giving permission to the rest of the class to do the same. Students must feel supported and cared about to feel connected to their teachers. This closeness is built through positive emotion and warmth the student and teacher share with one another and can be directly linked to increases in academic performance and decreases in discipline referrals.

Brunzell et al. (2019) followed teachers who were trained in the trauma-informed positive education TIPE model and focused on how educators shifted their pedagogy after

learning the intervention. Teachers who attempted to add a growth mindset into their curriculum found success in the classroom as students were more on-task, engaged in self-talk that incorporated a reference to growth or fixed mindsets, increased in positive student language, and increased time spent on-task instead of disruptions and distractions. Brunzell et al. found teachers could use TIPE to intentionally portray the curriculum in ways that allow students to perceive characteristics in themselves as well as the characters in the stories they read about or the people they learn about through history.

Brunzell et al. (2019) were able to highlight how students were able to utilize TIPE to cultivate emotional intelligence to understand intense emotions when faced with new or difficult challenges as well as help to dispel the anxiety of being exposed as unknowledgeable or feeling frustration when situations seem out of their control. Some teachers found self-talk strategies as a way for students to focus on positive thoughts and remain focused on what they can accomplish. Brunzell et al. further suggested that student behavior should not be seen as something that needs to be contained; rather, it should be seen as something that should be positively reinforced through celebrating and intentionally providing opportunities for trauma- impacted students to be noticed and recognized for achievements. Sometimes a teacher may even need to steer the discussion or curriculum in a certain direction to help incorporate material that may be more digestible or relatable to students impacted by trauma.

Tabone et al. (2020) examined Trauma-Informed Elementary Schools (TIES), similar to the (attachment, regulation, and competency) ARC Framework, and found that classrooms receiving the TIES program showed significant improvements in classroom organization, instructional support, and emotional support in comparison to control groups. Results were consistent with a pilot evaluation of TIES. Tabone et al. suggested implementing trauma-

informed early intervention services because they are critical interventions that should be implemented to prevent developmental delays because of an individual's challenges due to trauma.

Avery et al. (2020) investigated current evidence for trauma-informed school-wide models, synthesize common elements and approaches, consider the elements that promote change, and examine aspects of implementation sustainability. Avery et al. found pre-intervention considerations such as whether the school was ready, motivated, had leadership buy-in, and the intervention aligned with school core values were beneficial. Avery et al. discovered that a small number of published studies meet SAMHSA criteria, and there lies a need for school-based research to increase empirical research and analysis. Also, Avery et al. mentioned needed improvements in research design such as larger sample sizes, longitudinal studies, and reducing bias by improving participant blinding. Finally, Avery et al. determined that a lack of formal psychometrics exists to analyze when schools truly develop a trauma-informed culture, including shifts in teacher mind-set, the quality of relationships between school, student, and family, and monitoring progress towards outcome goals.

Collier et al. (2020) examined literature regarding trauma and found educators need to reflect on the trauma and experiences of their students to understand their complex backgrounds, but also that there are several barriers for educators to establish a universal framework for trauma-informed care. Collier et al. discussed components, principles, practices, frameworks, and whole-school multi-tiered approaches of Trauma-Informed Care (TIC). Collier et al. also identified that the existing research on this topic fits the systems framework of developmental psychopathology, considering a child's development in comparison to typical development, considering the root cause of the behavior, as well as the adaptations and competencies the child

has put into place to manage the behavior's impact on their overall functioning. Important information for teachers who use this lens to support students include their age when the trauma occurred, the risk and protective factors that have been and still are in place, some sense of the psychological damage done to the student, the relationship the child had with the perpetrator, as well as the intensity, duration, and frequency of the child's trauma.

For TIC to be successful, teachers need to frequently collaborate with school and community-based mental health professionals (Collier et al., 2020). It has been difficult for researchers to prove the efficacy of TIC because there are inconsistencies in how exactly teachers respond therapeutically to children who exhibit problematic behaviors and have also been victims of trauma. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) acknowledges the efforts of TIC to specifically address childhood trauma and work to intentionally respond in therapeutic ways that prevent any re-traumatization. Collier et al. found one of the most prominent and vital components to any TIC program is the relationships educators, specifically teachers, develop with their students to proactively prevent problematic behavior before it begins.

For educators to overcome the barriers that exist in implementing TIC, more research needs to be done highlighting the specific components of TIC which bring about positive academic and personal/social outcomes (Collier et al., 2020). Collier et al. suggested that school staff, including social workers and mental health practitioners work collaboratively to establish alternative models for teachers to consider, but also how vital it is for everyone to work simultaneously within a framework that is common. Collier et al. lastly suggested that schools strongly consider staff from other sectors such as social work, mental health, and family specialists as important team members in the challenge of meeting the needs of students who

have been exposed to trauma. Collier et al. clearly see a need for increased resources, collaboration, and research for schools to close the gaps that exist in terms of the amount of support students and families who have been victimized by trauma receive in terms of supporting attendance, retention, learning, and a student's willingness to engage in learning.

Zembylas (2020) examined common themes regarding how emotions, affect, and trauma impact classrooms. Trauma can be broadly defined but some aspects of a child's trauma, while important for teachers to understand, may be too intense or inappropriate for students to be aware. Zembylas determined that teaching can be impactful in repairing communities by switching from a victim vs perpetrator perspective to instead realizing that a person's trauma, though personally experienced, must be considered through a social and political lens because we are embedded in communities; thus, trauma and the impact it has on individuals also plays a role in the lives of those we share our communities with. Zembylas suggested the best way to understand the suggestions made include reframing the way most people perceive trauma as an ongoing event that cannot be overcome necessarily with therapy, but something that actively impacts a person's ability to resist the negative impacts of their trauma and be readily able to politically transform themselves to understand how their experiences impact their unique community and engage in learning that considers trauma in a multimodal way that may not necessarily demand personal vulnerability, but instead institute classroom ethics and politics that support and honor the range of emotions and affects that may be experienced by students throughout the course of a school day.

Parker and Hodgson (2020) found nine main themes when phenomenologically studying the main components of how teachers successfully respond to students who have been affected by trauma. Those nine themes include safety, relationships and connection, expertise and skill,

resources, time, managing outside or external pressures, environmental changes, understanding of self, and understanding of student and individualized attention. Brunzell et al. (2018) examined the reasons behind why teachers choose to work with students who have challenging behaviors. Brunzell et al. found teachers' well-being is compromised when not being given trauma-informed training, not being supported when secondary stressors such as dysregulation, isolation, distraction, sickness, inadequacy, and burnout arise, when the demands of the job exceed the resources available, and when teachers are experiencing distressing emotions after work. The only way a teacher would be able to communicate these feelings is to their administrators. Administrators and teachers play a collective role in working together to ensure that they are both growing professionally, while being supported emotionally.

Terrasi and Crain de Galarce (2017) discussed the need for teachers to create safe and supportive environments for all students, especially those who have been impacted by adverse childhood experiences. Terrasi and Crain de Galarce touched on the fact that students who are impacted by trauma are often in fight or flight mode because of the chronic stress in their life and thus will be hypersensitive to the stressors of a normal school day. Some students are reluctant to trust adults and form relationships, struggle to interpret non-verbal cues, and struggle to understand the perspectives of others. As a victim of trauma, some students will perceive their environment as potentially dangerous and therefore be hypervigilant, making learning very difficult to accomplish.

Terrasi and Crain de Galarce (2017) described the role teachers must play in modern schools to shift focus to a trauma-sensitive approach that demands educators to think differently about how they perceive their students and classrooms. To start, Terrasi and Crain de Galarce suggested the need for clearly defined roles and responsibilities for teachers to follow.

Understanding the balance between normal classroom routine and adapting to the special attention needed by individual students is the most difficult component to navigate. Also, teachers often do not know when to refer to outside mental health professionals for intervention or when to continue to search for solutions themselves. Promoting resilience in students means allowing them the opportunity to share aspects of their life with the class, get to know their teachers and classmates on personal levels, and practice and learn social and emotional skills such as self-regulation which will help them be able to be more resilient to the potential stressors of the school day.

RB-Banks and Meyer (2017) discussed the prevalence of childhood trauma and the need for schools to implement Trauma Informed Practices (TIPs) to strengthen students' abilities to learn how to live with their trauma. RB-Banks and Meyer suggested teachers need to be exposed to what the modern-day student with trauma may look like and how it can manifest in their classrooms. Consultation with experienced counselors or mental health professionals can provide teachers opportunities to learn successful classroom management strategies including how to ask the right questions, how to advocate, which agencies were available for support, and how to avoid reinforcing the negative behavior of a child with trauma in a way that makes them feel like they are "bad."

RB-Banks and Meyer, (2017) discussed that teachers in college preparation programs should be trained in these practices and be able to implement movement type therapeutic activities such as sand play therapy as well as allow student flexible ways of movement to process tension, tightness, fear, and anger that are stored in the body from the memory of trauma. Standing, sitting, moving around, walking or running in place, or shaking of body parts may help release pressure that is built up in their body. Teachers are not usually permissive of these

behaviors in the classroom, but with training in TIPs teachers can begin to think creatively when it comes to how some students may need to learn. Recognizing triggers and being sensitive enough to implement strategies to suppress those triggers means that teachers are willing to take on the responsibility of navigating their students' traumas in their classroom and not expecting that to be taken care of by some outside mental health professional. Most teachers take pride in being a support system for their students, and this study highlights the need for teachers to emphasize intentionally being a therapeutic force in the lives of every unique student, not always knowing what it is they go home to or what it is they have experienced in the past.

Tweedie et al. (2017) studied the impact of child migration due to war and how complex trauma from these events involved students who lacked self-regulation skills, did not always have secure caregiver attachments, and were often developmentally delayed because of their trauma. Tweedie et al. found that teachers report needing emotional stamina because students can be triggered by things as simple as certain sounds, touches, or lights. The reduction in cognitive ability due to frequent hyperarousal can negatively influence a child's ability to retain information. Children may also struggle to retain information due to the overwhelming memories of their trauma and their inability to be present in the moment. Tweedie et al. also mentioned the ARC Framework and how that can be utilized to help inform how educators understand trauma more deeply and its impact on a student, but also how teachers can help intentionally build resiliency within their students.

Mental Health

Dray et al. (2017) examined the impact of universal, school-based, resilience-focused interventions to specifically address mental health in children and adolescents using randomized controlled trials and found resilience-focused interventions were effective, compared to a control

group, in reducing symptoms of depression, internalizing problems, externalizing problems, and psychological distress. Dray et al. suggested educators implement universal resilience-focused interventions for short-term reductions in depressive and anxiety symptoms, and specifically if cognitive-behavioral therapy-based approaches are being used.

Hodgkinson et al. (2017) reported that 33% of all people living in poverty were children at the time of their study and highlighted the unfortunate truth that despite the high need for mental health services among poor families, access to high-quality mental health care is not always available. Hodgkinson et al. discussed how pediatric primary care physicians (PCP) have a responsibility to identify and address the existing disparities in quality mental health care. Hodgkinson et al. suggested practitioners can increase access to mental health services for those who are poor by including education and training, clinical infrastructure, and multidisciplinary teams.

Specifically, education and training should focus on cultural shifts and skill development, considering the importance of the PCP in noticing and treating mental health concerns, and helping families to initiate and consistently access mental health care (Hodgkinson et al., 2017). Also, clinical infrastructure is a critical factor in providing attainable and sustainable services, along with multidisciplinary teams being assembled to ensure comprehensive, high-quality mental health care along with improved communication and organization among those different providers such as school personnel, mental health professionals, case managers, social workers, nurses, PCPs, and office staff.

Pascoe et al. (2019) conducted a narrative review of students and their stressors and discovered that higher levels of perceived academic-related stress can be negatively associated with mental and physical health as well as academic achievement. Pascoe et al. suggested that

education can improve student academic-related stress by integrating programs that specifically address decreasing stress and increasing stress management and coping skills. The perceptions of intense levels of academic stressors for adolescents were found from the narrative review as cross-cultural and widespread and were found to negatively impact future occupation attainment, learning capacity, sleep quality and quantity, physical health, mental health, and substance use frequencies. Thus, Pascoe et al. suggested an emphasis on stress-management skills and ensuring that those abilities increase over time as the student progresses through secondary education and perhaps beyond.

Carsley et al. (2018) examined mindfulness interventions through a meta-analysis of 24 studies and overall found these interventions to have small to moderately significant effects on pre and post interventions compared to control groups. The largest impact mindfulness was shown to have was on the mental health and well-being of 15–18 year-olds when they were combined with a variation of different mindfulness techniques. Also, interestingly, impacts varied significantly depending on who provided the mindfulness activity. Outside facilitators were found to not be as impactful as educators students already knew and had developed rapport with. Further suggestions for research include looking deeper into supporting educators in providing intentional, effective mindfulness training programs that meet the mental health needs of students. Carsley et al. suggested that developmental periods be taken into consideration when studying the impacts of mindfulness. Carsley et al. noticed the lack of correlation between mindfulness practices and how they specifically impact developmental stages.

O'Reilly et al. (2018) conducted a literature review of mental health promotion in schools and first noted the lack of universality in the field and therefore relied on the World Health Organization to define their search for positive mental health promotion interventions and found

that advancements in universal interventions has made little progress; terminology is often variable; long-term impacts of mental health promotion are rarely studied, and inconsistencies exist in the people who are running the interventions regarding varying degrees of education and training. O'Reilly et al. also found that universal school-based interventions have great potential to target large groups of students to support general well-being. The most impactful finding, perhaps, was the realization that the core challenge for successful mental health promotion is that they are too often short-term with little long-term follow-up. Another astute analysis from O'Reilly et al. was that participants are almost always evaluated immediately or shortly after being exposed to the intervention with little consideration of long-term effects.

O'Reilly et al. (2018) further suggested that the universal whole-school approaches to mental health promotion should be set aside in more manageable and sustainable proportions. Another discussed challenge to providing universal school-wide mental health promotion is students' willingness to sustain engagement in these interventions over time. O'Reilly et al. suggested that a faculty member be identified as a mental health champion and take the lead in each school building when it comes to implementing mental health promotion interventions into the classroom environment. O'Reilly et al. also suggested that the modes for delivering mental health interventions must be considered as well. Young people will be disinterested in the interventions unless it is specifically intended to meet their interests and be developmentally appropriate for them. O'Reilly et al. mentioned more universal training, cooperation, and shared knowledge are required if universal mental health approaches are to exist at all. At the current moment there is a need to integrate whole-school mental health promotion intervention approaches and perhaps more modern digital interventions will be part of the solution.

Carrion et al. (2019) conducted a systematic review looking for evidence of interventions that have been used to help serve children in school communities who needed additional mental health support and the effectiveness of those interventions. Carrion et al. found that largely mental health interventions were reported to decrease disruptive behaviors and affective symptoms such as depression and anxiety, also increasing overall perception of well-being and an increase in social skills. Carrion et al. reported that although mental health interventions in school communities are often badly needed and found to be effective in decreasing symptoms of mental health disorders and promoting healthy emotional well-being, there is a lack of research in the specific outcomes of these interventions long-term.

Golberstein et al. (2020) described the efforts made by educators to increase access to mental health services for children during the coronavirus global pandemic and made some suggestions about possible actions moving forward. A suggestion was increasing the amount of school-based mental health services that exist inside the school, so students and families are much more likely to get the services they so desperately need. Another suggestion was to offer more telehealth options temporarily, noting that they are less effective, but better than no treatment at all. Also, Golberstein et al. discussed the barriers some families and students would have to telehealth due to lack of access to the internet or a device and how Medicaid could help negate these challenges by being more flexible in what they consider client-patient contact.

Mental Health Effects (2020) found that the global pandemic caused by the coronavirus was extremely detrimental to the mental health of all people but was particularly hard for those who already were struggling with their mental health. Access to mental health services also decreased tremendously during the pandemic, negatively impacting the effectiveness of the support systems built to support people who are struggling even before the pandemic. Anxiety

caused by the fear of contracting the virus caused many people not to know how to navigate life without socialization. Mental Health Effects discussed the need for long-term analysis on how the pandemic will impact mental health for people long-term.

Singh et al. (2020) conducted a narrative review of existing literature surrounding the coronavirus pandemic and the impact the lockdown had on the increases in fear and anxiety around the globe in children and found there were vulnerability factors such as pre-existing mental health conditions, education status, developmental age, being economically disadvantaged, or being quarantined due to illness or fear of contracting the virus. Singh et al. revealed that young children demonstrated more clinginess, nightmares, disturbed sleep, inattentiveness, poor appetite, and separation problems that were significant. Singh et al. determined that temporary social isolation with no access to school and peers will have educational, psychological, and developmental impacts on children as they experience uncertainty, loneliness, and anxiety. Interestingly, Singh et al. also found that children who engage in compulsive internet gaming and social media were at higher risks to be impacted negatively.

Students who receive additional support at school such as speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other treatments were at a very high-risk to lose temporary access to those services (Singh et al., 2020). Singh et al. called on practitioners from multiple disciplines to come together to help ensure children and adolescents are getting the vital support they need, despite the new barriers that may exist. Singh et al. suggested that telehealth be implemented in situations when children and adolescents cannot access mental health support in a face-to-face scenario and further stated that this would open-up the possibilities to reach many more people who could benefit from the added support during a very stressful and anxious time. Singh et al.

lastly suggested that future studies look at the longitudinal impacts the pandemic had on child development and implement evidence-based plans of action based on those findings which cater to the psychosocial and mental health needs of vulnerable children and adolescents both during and after the pandemic.

Tang et al. (2021) conducted a cross-sectional survey examining primary and secondary schools in China during a week in March of 2020 and looked at depression, anxiety, stress, life satisfaction, perceived impact of home quarantine, and parent-child discussions on COVID-19. Anxiety was found to be the most prevalent symptom, and depression rates were high as well. Students were found to be happy with life for the most part and that increased during school closures. Interestingly, students who engaged in conversations with their parents about the coronavirus and the pandemic were much less likely to exhibit anxiety, depression, and stress as a result.

Tang et al. (2021) suggested that from their findings it can be inferred that parents play an important role in their children's perceptions of the pandemic and can support their mental health by engaging in open dialogue with their children about issues regarding the coronavirus. Children who have access to legal guardians who allow their children to navigate these conversations with their legal guardians will be much more resilient to the negative potential outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and stress. Tang et al. reported that this could serve as a reminder that mental health problems and resiliency can co-exist in children during a pandemic and legal guardians play a vital role in just how resilient children will be by the consistent opportunities given to children to communicate their feelings about the coronavirus and its impact on society.

Serving Students with Disabilities

Among all students identified as having a disability, students who have been diagnosed with emotional-behavioral disorders were the most likely of all students who have been identified as having a disability to drop out of school (Marder, 1992). Students identified as seriously emotionally disturbed continue to drop out at much higher rates and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) dispersed a national agenda recommending not ignoring the needs of any student, emphasizing social-emotional learning in addition to academics, and providing students opportunities to engage in activities that match with their strengths and interests (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The University of Minnesota conducted extensive research into the elements of programs that were effective in serving students who have a disability and found that they were similar to the same characteristics of effective programs serving students who are at-risk of dropping out (Lange, 1998).

Roxana and Carmen (2020) examined students in Turkey with intellectual disabilities to assess the way they develop interpersonal relationships and found a friend's behavior towards preadolescent individuals with an intellectual disability was the number one factor in choosing a friend, number two being the friend's behavior towards the learning process. Teenage students with an intellectual disability, however, placed their friend's behavior towards society as the number one factor determining who they chose to be a friend and the second most important trait for teenagers in this study were those peers whose behavior towards the work at hand dictated who they chose to be friends with.

Schoop-Kasteler and Müller (2019) conducted a systematic review of 36 studies regarding peer relationships for students with intellectual disabilities in special education

classrooms and found students develop different types of relationships depending on cognitive skill and classroom factors such as the type of special education classroom. Schoop-Kasteler and Müller also found that although students with intellectual disabilities tend to have fewer friends than their peers who are typically developing, they also are likely to associate with individuals who are like themselves. Schoop-Kasteler and Müller further found that students who were of lower cognitive functioning and had increased disruptive behaviors were less likely to be well accepted by their peers. Schoop-Kasteler and Müller suggested that benefits could be made from an increased focus on specific social skills training and education.

Roorda et al. (2021) examined differences in student-teacher relationship quality and engagement with school assignments between males in special education classrooms specifically designed for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and males in general education classrooms. Roorda et al. looked at the strength of associations between these elements. Roorda et al. found when studying student perceptions of teacher-student relationships that boys in ASD special education classrooms experienced more conflict and teacher-student conflict was found to be more strongly related to school assignment engagement in students in the ASD special education classrooms than in boys in regular education classrooms, thus reinforcing previous literature's similar findings.

Roorda et al. (2021) discussed the need for interventions designed specifically at decreasing the amount of conflict in student-teacher relationships for students in ASD special education classrooms. Students in these classrooms are at-risk for increases in conflict with their teachers. Roorda et al. found the interventions suggested are not available currently because they do not exist. Roorda et al. suggested that interventions targeting reducing conflict for students

with externalizing problems be created to and adapted to help improve relationships with students with ASD and their teachers.

Interestingly, boys rated their closeness with their teachers at similar rates regardless of if they were in the mainstream classroom or were in the ASD special education classroom (Roorda et al., 2021). Roorda et al. found students with ASD experience similar warm, close attachment with their teachers, regardless of the severity of their symptoms. Teachers were the ones who were found to have varying levels of closeness with their students, thus researchers in this study further suggest that school personnel should provide relationship-focused interventions when teachers are having trouble developing close relationships with certain students. Roorda et al. further suggested that studies including females be conducted as well as students with ASD who have IQ scores less than 70, as each participant in this study had an IQ score of at least 70.

Interventions

Mikami et al. (2020) found elementary school teachers likely impact the peer social dynamics of the children in the classroom by the way they specifically handle each child's behavior problems. A student may be reprimanded in a way that is unique to other students. Educators know all students cannot be treated the same way. Students do not all need the same things from educators, but this difference must be handled with intentionality. Mikami et al. also found that teachers have the potential to promote inclusiveness among children and create classrooms where students are more respectful to one another, increasing the likelihood of students feeling psychologically safe and accepted by other members of the group. This teaching style was found to specifically be helpful for some students who have been identified as having ADHD. Students with ADHD were not the only students who benefited from these types of

teacher behaviors, but it was shown to improve sociometric ratings over the course of the school year.

The two characteristics of classroom rules that have been found to be most impactful in limiting disruptive behavior in the classroom are whether the classroom rules were taught or not and whether they were tied to positive and/or negative consequences (Alter & Haydon, 2017). Addressing negative behavior and promoting prosocial behavior were both found to be influential by teachers. The way rules are phrased was shown to have a significant impact on the way rules are perceived by students and it further went to mention there should only be the number of classroom rules that are necessary, not a set number just to follow guidelines that may be totally unrelated to that unique classroom. Finally, Alter and Haydon found that students may best thrive in a classroom environment where they are involved in the creation of the rules. Such autonomy helps students perceive to be working for themselves instead of a teacher whom they perceive to be in control of their learning.

Bradshaw et al. (2018) studied teachers receiving Double Check coaching as a strategy to address discipline referrals and found the rate of incident rate ratios particularly among black students decreased when teachers were trained with Double Check. Double Check coaching involved ongoing support and provided a culturally sensitive problem-solving approach that helped teachers improve classroom management by focusing on their culturally unique relationship with each student. Taking the time to consider the cultural lens each student brings to the learning environment is vital in an educator's ability to build strong rapport with each student and present learning through a vehicle each unique student can be comfortable maneuvering in.

Welsh and Little (2018) discussed the discrepancy in discipline rates among black students and white students and suggested that teacher-student matches and interactions, teacher discretion, as well as cultural discrepancies are likely to blame. What Welsh and Little found most concerning was that even when alternative approaches to exclusionary discipline were implemented and the frequency of out of school suspensions (OSS) went down, African-American students were still disproportionately disciplined. Despite discipline rates trending down for all groups involved in the study, the discrepancy between white and black students being disciplined did not improve, thus indicating a lack of success in moderating the subjective nature of black students being punished at a higher rate than white students.

Duong et al. (2019) found that Establish-Maintain-Restore (EMR) was effective in improving the relationship between teachers and students by decreasing the frequency of disruptive behaviors when compared to a control group of students who were not exposed to EMR. EMR was determined to have significant impacts on students who had either weak or average student-teacher relationships but showed little impact on students who already had strong relationships with their teachers. Thus, EMR is best suited for scenarios where student-teacher relationships are already not in a good place. A teacher who already has strong relationships with their students may not see the same value in EMR.

Students who are referred to alternative schools have a vast array of different risk and protective factors that make it ineffective to create a “one size fits all model” for alternative education (Griffith et al., 2019). Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions may need to further be developed to fit the diverse needs of students who attend alternative school. An emphasis on a SW-PBIS has been suggested to reinforce desirable behavior and shift focus away from negative behavior. Students who attend alternative school settings most often have behavioral and mental health

needs. To meet the unique needs of each student across all contexts, alternative school settings should apply a SW-PBIS that requires a specific approach that is personally tailored to each student.

Williams (2009) noted teachers are always looking for improved strategies; maintaining a critical lens of teaching practices is vital to meet the needs of unique learners, and surface level reflection is not deep enough, teachers need to reflect on what worked, why it worked, and how it made students feel. Williams compared two models of classroom management, behavioral and mindfulness-based with a group of 5th graders and found that mindfulness-based practices were the only ones to show improvement when pre- and post-assessments were conducted (Long et al., 2018).

Simonsen et al. (2010) looked at the impacts of implementing a 3-year program of introducing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) into an alternative school environment. Simonsen et al. documented that physical restraint rates were seen to decrease with the implementation of SWPBS because of the specific implementation of three tiers of intervention support: universal, targeted group, and individualized interventions. Examination of the effectiveness of SWPBS in this case study found that teachers were meeting or exceeding expectations in treating students with positivity, equitably allowing students to respond, and offering corrective feedback.

Also, Simonsen et al. (2010) found that SWPBS helped lower the number of disciplinary incidents that were documented, but not just that, the number of physically aggressive incidents also decreased as well from 70% of students having no aggressive altercations to 83% of students not having incidents of physical aggressiveness. SWPBS was also found to have positive impacts on reducing the number of students who were truant, as attendance increased

over the course of the three-year study. Simonsen et al. concluded that a SWPBS can be effective in serving as a proactive intervention to support the social and emotional needs of students in alternative programs. Student outcomes, attendance, and discipline referrals can all be positively impacted by a SWPBS.

A revealing, yet difficult to accept truth is that students who are facing severe emotional and behavioral challenges are not adequately served by both the educational and mental health system in the United States (National Association of School Psychologists, 2002). Gresham (2005) found that students who have been diagnosed as emotionally disturbed have needs that are overwhelming the ability of public schools to support their challenges. Philosophical and fiscal reasons can be blamed for these failures as schools have not always taken responsibility for the mental health needs of students. Gresham reported, Emotional Disturbance (ED), as it is described in federal legislation (IDEA), has specifically identified students who are socially maladjusted as ineligible for services, where students who have internalizing behaviors such as depression and anxiety, are eligible because these problems are seen to be beyond their control. If a student is seen to be a victim of their circumstances, then they are seen to have a true disability.

The nature of this extremely subjective determination is the reason a large discrepancy exists in the students who are advocated for and thus receive the adequate support needed to fulfill their academic, personal/social, and career potential (Gresham et al., 2005). The implementation of an evidenced-based Response to Intervention (RTI) program has the desired result of supporting students who may need additional help in certain subjects, but if RTI services are inadequate in being able to support the student, that student may be eligible for ED services (Gresham, 1999). Gresham claimed the social maladjustment exclusion clause in the

federal definition of ED creates an ambiguous area that provides too much subjectivity in determining who is eligible for special education services under the label of ED and who is not, thus restricting support for a proportion of students due to subjectivity.

The school-to-prison pipeline is a term that has been used to describe at-risk students, often minorities, whose academic and behavioral challenges are described as driving them towards criminal activity and eventually incarceration (Cochran & Cochran, 2017). Early intervention is critical in ensuring that students do not become disengaged and disenfranchised from the school experience. Students selected upon referral were compared to a control group; the referred students received two 30-minute sessions a week of Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) (Cochran et al., 2010) with the same counselor resulting in improved overall behavior and self-esteem, while the control group significantly decreased in the same areas over the nine-week span. Scores were determined from a pre and post-test using the Teacher's Report Form for Ages 6-18 of the Child Behavior Checklist (TRF) and the Self-Efficacy Scale for Children-Teacher Version (SES).

Students living in poverty are often developing in environments that are less suited for attaining self-regulation skills (Cochran & Cochran, 2017). CCPT can be effective for children ages 3-12 who live in high-poverty areas and are struggling with disruptive behaviors in elementary school. CCPT was developed from the works of Virginia Axline and her 1940s work in nondirective Play Therapy (Axline, 1947), but also Carl Rogers' theory of person-centered therapy (Rogers, 1946). CCPT can be used specifically to address childhood depression, conduct disorder, attachment problems, physical and sexual abuse, and other traumas associated with grief and everyday life. The connection to alternative education seems transparent. Students in alternative education settings have not had access to CCPT traditionally in the past, despite the

effectiveness CCPT has been proven to provide students who face many of the same challenges as those students who attend alternative public schools.

Preventing CCPT from being utilized more frequently may be the outside perception that CCPT allows children to be in control and simply allow more play when often teachers are frustrated by the child's desire to play in class in the first place (Cochran et al., 2010). Similarly, CCPT can be seen as easy to practice because it is nondirective, but the intentionality required demands a high skill set from practitioners. CCPT is grounded in the work of Rogers (1946) by focusing on the relationship between the student and the practitioner as the therapeutic agent that brings about change.

Rogers (1946) implied that everyone is responsible for themselves and that everyone has a strong desire to be as independent, productive, and socially adjusted as they possibly can be. Counselors trained in person-centered therapy provide a safe, permissive environment for the individual where boundaries are set on behavior, but never attitude. Rogers felt all emotions and attitudes were valid and deserved unconditional positive regard for the client to be able to self-assess and readjust their own perceptions and behaviors by accepting one's whole self, especially the aspects that may have been previously ignored. The hope through Person-Centered approach is that the client will be intrinsically motivated to behave in ways to achieve newly created goals from their increased personal awareness.

Anyon et al. (2018) used a qualitative approach to look at discipline strategies in an urban school area and found most educators in the study reported that strong student-staff relationships created outcomes such as productive problem solving when faced with conflict. Anyon et al. reported school leaders specifically mentioned how relationships played a vital role in the climate of the school and the frequency of discipline referrals. Educators in the study were

commonly discussing the importance of familial involvement and discovered that engaging with parents, family meetings, positive phone calls, and keeping families informed about what is going on in the school all were mentioned as being the most impactful.

Martin and Collie (2018) examined teacher-student positive and negative relationships and the impacts those had on student school engagement and found the benefits of having more positive relationships than negative ones outweighed the limitations of having more negative relationships than positive ones. Martin and Collie suggested the number of positive relationships a student has with faculty members in the building, the more likely that student is to be engaged in that school. Martin and Collie also suggested that positive psychology be researched as an intervention in classrooms to promote more positive relationships. Interestingly, Martin and Collie discovered that it may be particularly beneficial to focus heavily on student-teacher relationships during transitions, such as elementary to high school and the beginnings of school years.

Martin and Collie (2018) recommended teachers identifying students with a history of poor literacy and numeracy and proactively seek these students to offer support, providing relational support for a student who likely will need increased academic support as well. Martin and Collie also suggested that students that are of low socioeconomic status (SES) be supported with resources that help them be on a level playing field with their peers, as enjoyment rates for students with low SES were not as high as enjoyment rates for students from high SES families. Thus, Martin and Collie suggested students require different amounts of support in different areas depending on the nature of their situation.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine that began February 24th, 2022, has sparked a global humanitarian crisis; millions of people have been displaced from their homes, and people have

migrated across Europe and into the United States. Ferguson-Patrick (2020) suggested there be increased opportunities to provide training and gain awareness of the refugee learners' needs and be particularly sensitive to the trauma of being displaced from a homeland because of war.

Ferguson-Patrick calls on educators to revolutionize the teaching profession so that classrooms that are increasingly diverse can still thrive collaboratively. Understanding and respecting others as well as being comfortable with differences are all suggestions made to best promote classrooms where each learner, regardless of cultural background, can be respected, connected, engaged, and ready to learn and grow, particularly those who have experienced social, economic, or educational disadvantages.

Ferguson-Patrick (2020) looked at intercultural competence and culturally responsive education, important topics in schools, and found that teachers who exhibit an emphasis on care were able to develop the strongest relationships with students and succeeded in strong engagement in their classrooms. Specifically, Ferguson-Patrick found that teachers were most successful when focusing on encouraging students to recognize and value themselves. Ferguson-Patrick observed that students communicated among themselves and with their teachers in open dialogue when teachers promoted a culture of care among one another.

Heliot et al. (2020) suggested from their findings that students should be understood, and teachers should acquire a level of awareness when it comes to the sensitivity in social learning relationships and how those directly relate to each student's being able to come to terms with their own identity. Heliot et al. findings are particularly relevant in classrooms that contain multi-cultural representation among students. Heliot et al. further suggested developing holistic, integrated views of curriculum that create opportunities for students to engage in cross-cultural and interdisciplinary activities.

Dolev and Lashem (2016) qualitatively examined emotional intelligence competencies among teachers and discovered that teachers who improved their own emotional self-awareness became more attuned to students' emotions and reported being more actively aware of emotional situations that exist within the classroom. Dolev and Lashem also found enhanced self-regard and assertiveness resulted in increased confidence when approaching parents, not giving in to students' pressures, setting high and realistic expectations, and ultimately overall better classroom management. Improvement in impulse control was also found to be beneficial in terms of avoiding hurting students' feelings and more effectively regulating their emotions.

Empathy, interpersonal relationships, and communication skills all improved when teachers increased their emotional intelligence (Dolev & Lashem 2016). Teachers, because of improvement in their emotional intelligence, increased opportunities for one-on-one time with students, provided opportunities for students to talk and listened to their concerns, showed a genuine interest in what they are doing outside of school, spoke more positively to students, engaged in dialogue more frequently instead of lectures, used open-ended questions to promote creative thought, and focused on the strengths of each individual student. Interestingly, Dolev and Lashem found that increases in teacher emotional intelligence didn't just benefit the student. Teachers reported being more self-confident, assertive, socially responsible, and pursued leadership positions and other opportunities such as teaching advanced-level classes, new subjects, special education classes, and even also were willing to work with higher grades.

Rucinski et al. (2018) looked at teacher-child relationships, as perceived by the children and teachers themselves, and whether those were associated with child social-emotional and academic outcomes over the course of one school year, and how much these associations are impacted by the quality of the emotional climate that is set by the classroom teacher.

The interventions used to provide emotional support for students may be effective when teacher-student relationships were of low quality. Rucinski et al. further stated that classroom environmental changes were not helpful in offsetting negative student-teacher relationships. Rucinski et al. suggested there is no compensation for a quality relationship between student and teacher.

Chen et al. (2021) performed a cross-cultural comparison of student shyness on teacher-student relationships by looking at the Netherlands and China and found in both countries, students with higher levels of shyness seemed to experience less closeness and more conflict, but surprisingly, students from China were more negatively impacted by their shyness than their Netherlands counterparts. Chen et al. suggested Western cultures have more of an individualistic society; therefore, characteristics of shyness are not necessarily considered detrimental in comparison to Eastern cultures that have a more collectivist type society that expects a certain level of interpersonal connectedness that may not always be expected in Western classrooms. Chen et al. also found that shy students were more likely to have adversarial relationships with teachers that go unnoticed by teachers, leaving them more susceptible to not engaging or feel connected and suggests training for teachers that allows them to be aware of the emotional fluctuations of students who identify as shy.

Walker and Graham (2021) studied students in Australia during their first 6 years of school and looked at associations between child characteristics, children's attitudes towards school, classroom quality, and the quality of teacher-student relationships finding girls, children who are better at self-regulation, and children who are less hyperactive were the most likely to have close relationships with their teachers. Walker and Graham also found high language scores being significantly correlated with self-regulation, school readiness, relationship quality, and

fewer problematic behaviors. Low language scores were related to lower abilities to self-regulate, less school readiness, more problematic behavior, and a likelihood to have an adversarial relationship with their teachers.

Walker and Graham (2021) found the strong association between language, self-regulation, and less problematic behavior suggested that difficulties in language may be an obstacle to positive student-teacher relationships. Walker and Graham further found that student attitudes towards their teacher was a stronger influence of the quality of the relationship between student-teacher than the attitudes the students have about the school. Also, classrooms where emotional support is provided were found to contribute to closer student-teacher relationships.

Interestingly, Walker and Graham (2021) also found that students were more likely to engage in conflict with teachers when there was a high level of instructional support. While this may seem counterintuitive, students in this study lacked the appropriate language and self-regulatory skills and were more likely to be engaged in conflict when they were faced with greater intellectual and linguistic demands. Walker and Graham suggested that to promote strong student-teacher relationships there should be an early emphasis on teaching students oral language development and self-regulatory skills, while also not implementing too many instructional interventions and demands before a child is developed in these areas as well as creating classroom environments that are emotionally supportive.

Wanders et al. (2020) performed a cross-sectional multilevel analysis of Dutch parents and their role on adolescents' social involvements as well as how positive teacher-student and student-student relationships lowered discrepancies in social involvement due to parental background differences and found more positive relationships with teachers were associated with higher levels of social involvement. Wanders et al. also observed that students from higher-

educated parents who also are involved in a positive student-teacher relationship were more likely to be more socially involved than students whose parents were less educated despite having a positive teacher-student relationship. Student-student relationships were found to have a positive effect on a students' social involvement when individual and average school perceptions were positive.

Wanders et al. (2020) also found that students of higher educated parents and of parents who were of higher incomes were more involved in socializing than students whose parents were less educated and students whose parents made less money. Interestingly though, students whose parents were not working were more likely to socialize than those students who had both parents who were working. Parenting styles seemed to be unrelated to outcomes in social involvement, but students with more academic self-efficacy and success were found to be more likely to be socially involved. Finally, Wanders et al. found students from more urban and highly populated areas to be more socially involved than those who were from more rural areas.

Volungis and Goodman (2017) studied school violence in the United States and discussed and assessed how teacher-student relationship skills, teacher-student communication skills, and multicultural competence among teachers can help prevent adolescent school violence. Volungis and Goodman formulated a theoretical model describing the elements of teacher-student relationship skills, teacher-student communication skills, and multicultural competence to achieve prevention of school violence. Teacher-student relationship skills were broken down into showing empathy, non-judgmental interaction, and demonstrating dignity and respect, each important in forming a strong teacher-student alliance.

Next, Volungis and Goodman (2017) describe that teacher-student communication skills which promote trust at a collective level include attending and listening, open ended questions,

reflection and validation, reframing, paraphrasing, challenging, self-disclosure, and summarizing. Multicultural competence training was also added as a key element in the development of school connectedness for students. Volungis and Goodman described the goal in developing school connectedness was to build school climates where there existed dignity and respect within and between teachers and students. Specifically, Volungis and Goodman suggested that training be designed to build on existing skills and help teachers feel that the more they are investing the more they are receiving in return regarding improved teacher-student relationships, student academics, student well-being, and ultimately a potential reduction in school violence. A strong suggestion made by Volungis and Goodman is the need for further studies to examine training programs that are specifically implemented for teachers to acquire skills and measure their effectiveness alongside student-reported school connectedness in a longitudinal model.

Perhaps Hofer et al. (2020) best described what has been found to work well for students in alternative education when stating that teachers can facilitate student academic, social, and emotional growth by intentionally meeting each student's basic psychological needs. Aspiranti et al. (2018) found that the Color Wheel System (CWS) was found to effectively decrease unwanted behaviors for all students, specifically students who had been diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum. Although the results of Aspiranti et al. were all within Catholic schools, similar classroom dynamics are perceived to be at play in public, charter, and other types of private schools as well. CWS, as an example of a class-wide PBIS system, states that time on Red for a student is used in as limited a way as possible, and Green is designed to be used to also reinforce group rewards as much as possible.

Aspiranti et al. (2019) found the CWS to be effective in specifically increasing on task behavior and reducing disruptive behaviors. Aspiranti et al. also suggested additional research that looks at the impact of social stories on students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It was asked in the study by teacher participants whether a visual SMART board countdown clock could be used in conjunction with the CWS. It was not and only temporal cues were utilized; however, this strategy would be an additional support and provide students with ASD the ability to predict transitions more quickly and easily.

Reimer and Pangrazio (2018) studied alternative education in Australia and discovered that students were most likely to be successful re-engaging in learning and improving their educational self-concepts if they feel supported in a wide range of non-academic outcomes. When students felt their alternative education program supported their personal and social well-being was when they could make improvements in their lives in terms of their housing and employment opportunities. Reimer and Pangrazio reported it is not enough for many students for school to simply be a place to learn core subject areas. Students often need to understand how school is going to help them solve their real-world problems right now because they are too often simply trying to survive or avoid additional trauma. Schools can help the problem at hand if connections are made with each student, student are met where they are, and schools provide students the tools to meet whatever challenges they may be facing, inside or outside of the classroom.

Brooks (2020) discussed how students as young as prekindergarten age could benefit from identifying sensory needs such as auditory/visual input, providing deep pressure, and using tactile tools to help students self-regulate when feeling overwhelmed. Brooks specifically described the increased effectiveness of sensory strategies for students who have been impacted

by trauma. Sensory integration requires intentional planning and teaching students routines they can follow to help soothe them in a particular way.

Teacher Burnout

Not only do educators need to be aware of the trauma of their students, but they also need to be aware how the trauma of their students is impacting their own mental health. Teachers are at-risk for developing secondary traumatic stress (STS), which are reactions such as difficulties concentrating, fatigue, lack of enjoyment from activities that were once fun, isolation or avoidance of others, negative thoughts, depressed and anxious moods, and unwillingness to take on new tasks.

Self-care strategies are important for educators to engage in to off-set the negative impact STS can have (Pickens & Tschopp, 2017). Pickens and Tschopp identified some self-care strategies for educators who are at-risk for STS: connecting with supportive individuals in engaging in non-work related activities; rewarding oneself periodically throughout the day with something enjoyable such as a snack, music, TV, or anything desirable; taking breaks with vacations but also mini-breaks throughout each day using mindfulness practices; prioritizing physical health with quality sleep, nutrition, and exercise; and avoiding excessive alcohol intake. When teachers are in a better psychological state, then they can create psychologically safe learning environments which allows them to be trauma-responsive and to establish trauma-informed classrooms where each individual learner's unique experiences are considered and valued.

Miller and Flint-Stipp (2019) examined pre-service teacher coursework and interviews surrounded around student trauma, secondary trauma, and how self-care should be utilized and

found that although school counselors and social workers have been perceived as addressing student mental health in the past, it is obvious now that teachers are under trained when it comes to responding to student trauma, as well as preventing their own burnout from secondary trauma. Pre-service teachers completing their practicum experience were most negatively impacted when students told personal stories of their trauma to teachers. Teachers were also severely impacted by knowing the circumstances certain students were living in. These actions have caused teachers to say they spend more time getting to know students and their backgrounds as they begin to empathize with them. Miller and Flint-Stipp suggested teachers place a high importance on building relationships with students and preparing themselves for indirect trauma to happen as a result.

Miller and Flint-Stipp (2019) also discussed how self-care was unanimously recommended as an initial topic of discussion for teacher preparation courses. The emotional, mental, and physical toll that secondary trauma can play is sometimes devastating. Miller and Flint-Stipp suggested educators need to commit themselves to consistent self-care as they also commit themselves to consistent exposure to indirect trauma as they build tight bonds with their students who are dealing with trauma. Resiliency in students and teachers can be built when trusting relationships are formed and respect is reciprocated.

Bottiani et al. (2019) discussed the tendency for teachers to experience burnout and how high levels of teacher stress negatively impacts their ability to manage disruptive behaviors. Bottiani et al. found that it is important for teachers to have the perception that resources are available to them that allow them to improve their classroom management skills. Teacher affiliation to support groups and fellow colleagues were also seen as potential barriers for teacher

burn out by providing teachers the opportunity to share their stress with a group of people who understand their day-to-day challenges.

Iancu et al. (2017) described teacher burnout as a serious concern for education institutions but found it difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons for teacher burnout because each person faces unique circumstances. Additional research looking into specific stressors in the education environment and looking further into interventions that are proven to address teacher burnout was suggested. Teacher self-efficacy, in terms of classroom management skills, was tied to increased levels of teacher burnout.

Teacher burnout, as many would imagine, has been very high since the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the world. Pressley (2021) gave teachers an assessment measuring anxiety and stress directly related to COVID-19 and paired it with other variables to determine that almost a quarter of the 359 teachers reported feeling burnt out. In terms of the predictors of burnout, current teaching anxiety, anxiety communicating with parents, administrative support, and high anxiety and stress score on the CAS assessment were factors. This speaks to the need for teachers to spend time reflecting on their own stress and anxiety levels and to voice concerns they may have with a trusted administrator who can help them feel supported.

Pujalte et al. (2021) looked at five separate hypotheses related to teacher burnout, in Spain, utilizing a Spanish version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS-24) and the Socioemotional Competences Scale (SCS). Results indicated that teachers showed high levels of burnout, women and less experienced professionals being the most impacted. The most interesting finding was that teachers who rated high in emotional intelligence and socioemotional competencies also scored high in burnout rates. Pujalte et al. theorized that perhaps this was because of the difficulties of attempting to promote emotional

intelligence and socioemotional competency in a time of a pandemic when masking, social distancing, and sometimes total isolation have been required. Pujalte et al. then suggests that interventions that support emotional intelligence and socioemotional competencies for faculty members could buffer the potential burnout from these stressors.

Brasfield et al. (2019) indicated based on their findings that teachers would benefit from a comprehensive program specifically focused on supporting teachers in consistently engaging in wellness practices. To achieve this, Brasfield et al. suggested that a program be applied to both education and vocational settings. For education to be able to successfully implement this type of program, Brasfield et al. also suggested that teacher training programs, each individual school, and each school division as a whole work in coordination to maintain an effective teacher wellness program. Brasfield et al. also recommended that this information be shared with prospective educators before entering the workforce.

In another study, teachers completed the Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBERS) for each individual student in their classrooms along with a burnout assessment as well as a self-efficacy scale (McLean et al., 2019). McLean et al. found students' behavior and social emotional functioning can be rated differently by teachers based on the level of burnout and self-efficacy of the teacher. McLean et al. suggested administrators need to be aware of and consider teacher burnout when a teacher has a negative perspective of a student.

Fiorilli et al. (2016) discussed the conclusions of their results with 149 Italian teachers, and developed a hypothesis that teachers with lower emotional competencies are at a higher risk for burn- out, therefore, would likely benefit from external and internal resources designed to support emotional well-being and any professional development created to deter burnout should involve teachers working on their own emotional competence. Also, Fiorilli et al. implied that

instead of school districts focusing on more support being available to teachers, they stated that teachers would be more positively impacted if schools helped teachers access the resources that are already available to them. Too often teachers ignore the support that is provided and do not feel comfortable asking for help or being perceived as weak in any way. Fiorilli et al. also found that teacher achievement was negatively related to teacher burnout. When teachers perceive themselves to be making an impact and can get specific recognition for their often-selfless profession, it reminds them that they are needed and valued for the hard work they put in and the challenges they continue to overcome.

Rumschlag (2017) analyzed 162 rural Ohio Caucasian teachers and found a lack of a sense of personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization were the three largest identifiers of burnout. Rumschlag results, in which 86% of participants were female, like the U.S. teacher workforce gender ratios, found women were more likely at 77% to experience emotional exhaustion than men who were at 61%. Rumschlag findings were theorized as potentially because some men simply show up for the paycheck and are not as emotionally invested as other educators, or that men were potentially more likely to detach themselves from their work, emotionally, to avoid vulnerability, hopelessness, and irritability.

Rumschlag (2017) further suggested that teachers ensure that their own Maslow's hierarchy of needs are taken care of first and foremost when it comes to adequate access to water, warmth, security, and a sense of belonging to their school environment. Once those needs are met teachers can focus on mastering their craft, achieving set goals, and feeling a sense of gratification from their work. School districts across the nation lose teachers to burnout every year. Rumschlag suggested establishing an educational support community promoting growth and success.

An Australian study found emotional exhaustion, the core component of burnout, to be linked to job demands and the personal demand of work-family conflict. (Rajendran, 2020). Rajendran suggested that the creation of policy and culture that supports the integration of work and family could have positive results for teachers. A specific emphasis on attention to workload and coping strategies to reduce emotional exhaustion were strongly suggested because of the findings. Rajendran also identified mindfulness as a strategy which is known to be successful in reducing stress and has been proven to have psychological benefits to alleviate emotional exhaustion.

A study in the UK found similar results: teachers exhibited high levels of emotional exhaustion and low personal accomplishment scores (Shackleton et al., 2019). What was interesting was that the school environment was directly tied to burnout. Shackleton et al. indicates that administrators have an opportunity to reduce teacher burnout and help ensure teachers feel like they are accomplishing something in their hard work, feel a part of a community that values them, and sees them for what they can bring to each child.

Strengths-based leadership has been found to be an intervention administrators can implement to help teachers feel understood by their superiors for what it is they do well (Rath, 2008). Strengths-based leadership provides teachers an opportunity to get to know themselves and their strengths and then challenge themselves to utilize those characteristics in ways that help the school community. A person cannot reach their own potential if they are unaware of what that potential may be. A strengths-based approach to leadership also helps teachers feel recognized for the value they provide the school. Strengths-based leadership also provides a buffer for administration when a teacher needs to be coached or supported in a particular area that may be a weakness or a sensitive topic for the teacher. Creating a relationship that is based

on strengths-based leadership allows teachers to be more willing to be vulnerable when it comes to their own flaws and more ready to accept support or additional professional development.

Chapter Summary

Responses to disruptive student behavior vary among administrators, and some react more positively than others. Guindon (1992) has exhibited evidence showing in-school suspension programs to be more effective than out-of-school suspension programs. Alternative school programs can be viewed as a solution in replacement of long-term out of school or in-school suspension. Guindon further asserted that alternative school options for students who are frequently suspended or removed from class need to include a humanistic or student-centered learning approach that considers each individual students' trauma as well as unique emotional and sensory needs.

The history of alternative schools has changed quite a bit over the past 60 years (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The original focus of alternative programs of the 1960's on humanistic approaches to protect autonomy and promote choice have circulated in and out of the mainstream construct of American education. Today we find ourselves with the Type I, Type II, and Type III versions of alternative schools that allow us to break down the different ways alternative schools serve public school communities. All three types are utilized for unique purposes and fulfill unique roles within their communities.

Limitations to understanding the history of alternative schools include the lack of any longitudinal data to support findings over an extended period and the typical nature of researchers being too closely associated with the programs they are researching (Lange & Sletten, 2002). It seems that some students, who are struggling emotionally with self-esteem,

best feel safe, nurtured, cared about, and willing to meet high expectations when they have close intimate relationships with the adult educators in their life. Students who have experienced higher frequencies of trauma, suffer from depression, or low self-esteem, and have struggled academically in the past could benefit from a smaller, more supportive classroom environment that allows the student to be challenged by adults who clearly establish a willingness to put their social/emotional needs at the forefront of their focus and intentions.

Alternative school programs have been identified as being successful in increasing self-esteem and overall satisfaction with the learning process when the alternative school, or mainstream classroom focuses more on the individual student, their needs, interests, and strengths, while surrounding them with a nurturing environment to be challenged (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The elements of the most successful alternative school programs can also be implemented into mainstream classrooms with very intentional effort.

Class size in a traditional classroom setting may or may not be something a teacher can control, but elements of every classroom that is at a teacher's disposal is the way they interact with their students, the amount of time taken to get to know students on a personal level, and the willingness to search and find unique strengths and passions for each learner and then incorporate as many aspects as possible into the lessons being taught (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

Introduction

This case study was conducted to examine the K-5 elementary program ASCT and its influence on the whole child. Literature does not contain universally accepted interventions that are effective in the K-5 elementary alternative setting to help students return to the K-5 elementary mainstream classroom setting better prepared to display appropriate behaviors when a student is removed from a mainstream classroom setting due to disruptive behaviors.

Research Questions

Essential Research Question: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of the K-5 elementary program ASCT influence K-5 elementary students to develop as a whole child?

Supporting Sub-Questions:

- 1.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be healthy?
- 2.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students to be safe?
- 3.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be engaged?
- 4.How were students supported by academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT?
- 5.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be challenged?

Table 1*Supporting Research Questions and Data Collection Protocol*

Supporting Research Questions	Interviews	Field Notes	Document Review
1.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be healthy?	X	X	X
2.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students to be safe?	X	X	X
3.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be engaged?	X	X	X
4.How were students supported by academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT?	X	X	X
5.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be challenged?	X	X	X

Research Design

The design of this study was a qualitative case study method. Case studies allow for deep, multi-faceted analysis into phenomena (Crowe et al., 2011). As such, it will be vital to report findings with enough contextual information to allow the reader to fully understand what processes were followed as well as how conclusions were reached. Case studies require specificity to create boundaries for inquiry and should include conducting a literature review, constructing a theoretical framework, identifying a research problem, crafting and sharpening research questions, as well as purposive sampling (Merriam, 1998). The components of ASCT that are of interest in a bounded context include whether students were healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged as a result of ASCT's influence on the whole child. Theme and Sub-Theme Coded interview responses, field notes taken during each interview, and a document review provided triangulated analysis.

Site Selection

A public elementary school in Southwest Virginia was the site for the ASCT program. This program served any eligible student from the school district's four elementary schools who were in Grades K-5. The program was housed in the middle of the school where the old main office was located. The ASCT program consisted of an academic curriculum that was individualized, and very often also based off the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The social/emotional and sensory regulation curriculum that was provided daily was consistently adjusted to meet the developmental appropriateness of each student. Behavioral interventions were also taught and reinforced daily with a token economy system where students would earn points that they could spend at the end of each week in a prize shop only available to ASCT students or save up their points and carry them over to the following week.

Participants

Eight total participants were interviewed in the study. This included six of the legal guardians whose children had been served as students by the ASCT program, the lead ASCT teacher, and the ASCT administrator. Selection of legal guardian participants was based on the willingness of legal guardians to participate in an interview that was audio recorded on my computer. The sample population for this study was six of the legal guardians of the 16 total students who have been served in ASCT. Purposeful sampling occurred to exclude the other 10 legal guardians who were either not able to be contacted for an interview due to moving out of the area or made the choice not to participate. There were legal guardians of Caucasian and African American students participating in the study. Students qualifying for ASCT must have received mental health support and self-regulation classroom interventions previously to show that the mainstream classroom had exhausted all possible resources to improve that student's academic potential before being enrolled in ASCT. Also, a referral for special education testing was made if the student did not already receive those services.

Data Collection Strategies

Data describing components of ASCT were collected using three different strategies. Legal guardians, the lead ASCT teacher, and the ASCT administrator engaged in semi-structured interviews that lasted 30-45 minutes and were recorded for accuracy purposes to answer the essential research question: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of the K-5 elementary program ASCT influence K-5 elementary students to develop as a whole child? Field notes made during each of the 10 semi-structured interviews were the second strategy used to collect data. Document reviews including school board meeting agenda

minutes, and division leadership meeting minutes served as the third data collection source. These three data sources provided triangulated analysis for the purposes of this case study.

Data Analysis Strategies

Interviews from six legal guardians, the lead ASCT teacher, and the ASCT administrator, totaling eight semi-structured interviews, were examined after being member checked following participant review of a copy of their interview transcript. Interviews were also transcribed and coded for common themes that arose. Field notes were taken during each semi-structured interview and considered as well. Document reviews included school board meeting agenda minutes, and division leadership meeting minutes. The academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT were examined by interviews, field notes were considered to better understand ASCT's influence on students' being healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, and document were reviewed. Theme and Sub-Theme Coded interview responses, field notes taken during each interview, and a document review provided triangulated analysis.

Assessment of Quality and Rigor

To ensure quality and rigor, there were four conditions in which rigor was addressed: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Issues of credibility were addressed using peer debriefing, member check strategies, and triangulated analysis. Peer debriefing occurred through periodic communication with my dissertation chair to share thoughts, address concerns, and acquire addition insight into the research process. Member check strategies were performed by allowing participants to review interview transcripts to determine accuracy. Triangulated analysis occurred in the data collection process by ensuring that the experiences of

three stakeholder groups, which consisted of the lead ASCT teacher, the lead ASCT administrator, and legal guardians of students who have been served by ASCT.

Transferability was addressed through purposive sampling. Legal guardian participants were specifically chosen because of their child's involvement in the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT and their willingness to participate in the audio recorded interview. It is reasonable to expect the responses of the participants will be transferrable to other legal guardians of students being served in K-5 elementary alternative programs.

Dependability was addressed by a code-recode strategy as well as peer examination. To ensure consistency, interview data was coded twice, using the same method on two separate occasions. Peer examination was accomplished by members of the dissertation committee confirming the findings of relevant codes. My experience coding interview transcripts as a part of an undergraduate research assistantship studying dating anxiety among college-age students helped sharpen my focus on the common themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data.

Confirmability was addressed using data triangulation and reflective practice. Data triangulation was accomplished through interview consideration of all three types of stakeholders lead teacher, administrator, and legal guardians to ensure consideration of each perspective. Interviews were combined with field notes and document reviews, all essential in providing triangulated analysis. Reflective practice was accomplished through taking field notes during interviews as well as consistently implementing the feedback of peer debriefing to ensure confirmability.

Ethical Considerations/Role of the Researcher

I obtained approval from the Human Research Protection Program (IRB) at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) before beginning this research. The ethical concerns brought up in this study are addressed through the informed consent that was acquired before participation was possible. Also, information was always kept confidential and only the direct stakeholders involved, as well as myself, were able to see or have access to the information. The information about the program was obtained through interviews, field notes kept, and transcripts coded. Additional data were obtained using the main classroom teacher's notes and academic records. During the time ASCT was in existence I worked in the same building serving as the Professional School Counselor for the school that ASCT was embedded in.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 provides a description of the research methods that were used to formulate the examination of ASCT. The design of the study, the participants, site, research questions, and ethical considerations were all discussed in this chapter as well as the data collection and analysis strategies. A table was provided in this chapter to help visualize all the methods of data analysis being used for the purpose of this study.

Chapter 4. Findings

The purpose of this case study was to examine how the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT used student-centered learning practices to influence the whole child. This chapter introduces the findings of my case study involving eight semi-structured interviews that were conducted with six legal guardians of the 16 total students that were served in the elementary alternative program, ASCT, as well as the lead teacher and the administrator overseeing the ASCT program. There is a lack of research on K-5 elementary alternative programs, such as ASCT, and specifically those that integrate student-centered learning to influence the whole child. Data analysis found five common themes and five sub-themes from participant interviews. Field notes taken during each interview are also considered in this chapter, along with a document review of school board agenda minutes and division leadership team meeting agendas where the ASCT program was discussed by school officials.

Theoretical Framework

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) has determined five major tenets that measure how educators influence the whole child and those are: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2022). These five tenets will serve as the theoretical framework for this research on the whole child and ASCD will function as the scientific authority on the whole child for the purposes this case study. The ASCD is a group of educators who advocate for the development of the whole child by inspiring other educators to achieve excellence in learning, teaching, and leading while intentionally focusing on ensuring students are: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. The ASCD advocates that when students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged they are provided an opportunity to realize their potential in school and in life.

Research Questions

The essential research question for this case study: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of the K-5 elementary program ASCT influence K-5 elementary students to develop as a whole child? The five supporting sub-questions for the case study:

- 1.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be healthy?
- 2.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students to be safe?
- 3.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be engaged?
- 4.How were students supported by academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT?
- 5.How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be challenged?

Common Themes

Analysis of the data identified five common themes related to the essential research question and supporting sub-questions. The common themes included Engaged, Space to Thrive/Choices, Identify Needs/Skills, Confidence/Hope, and Relationship. Each common theme is further explored in this chapter.

Common Theme One: Engaged

The first common theme identified in the data, which is also one of the five tenets of the whole child, is Engaged (ASCD, 2022). All eight participants referenced their child's level of engagement in the ASCT program. Common Theme One: Engaged, addressed research sub-question number three: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be engaged? The lead ASCT teacher mentioned strategies she used to keep students engaged.

We worked on projects together such as birding projects around the school: putting up feeders, maintaining those feeders, and collecting data for a statewide program called E-bird to document [types of birds]. What was really cool about it is to see their excitement about learning about birds.

The lead ASCT teacher also touched on a token economy system rewarding academic performance that was implemented to promote student engagement.

The academic piece was a second piece, but it was very much a part of their day as far as the structure piece goes and earning their tickets to get rewards to get to go to the store to purchase things on Friday. In the beginning, I could get by with smaller items, and I quickly had to go to more technology driven-items, Pokémon, personal interests, a lot of Minecraft things, little, teeny tiny figurines. They really worked hard and supported each other through that, and had different expectations [for their work].

Legal Guardian A mentioned:

He was actually trying more and obviously being in the class is the only time that he ever really came home and told me about what he learned that week. Since he has been in there going back to regular school, he has done a lot better. He's learning all of that.

In addition, Legal Guardian C talked about how her child was influenced to stay engaged, "They would give him little stuff to play with his hands and gave him a Lego thing and they did several techniques to try to get him to sit still and stuff before medication."

Furthermore, Legal Guardian D mentioned, "He's improved with everything, I mean, his grades are better: he's focusing longer, he's transitioning easier, and he can sit down and work for longer period of time."

Also, Legal Guardian E reported how the program was able to identify football as a personal interest of her son's and how that was able to keep him engaged by ASCT implementing football-related motivators in the token economy store.

In addition, Legal Guardian F stated, "Their activities were broken down; there was a specific time for everything. In the morning they knew exactly what they needed to get started on." She also explained the influence the token economy had on her son:

They earned a certain amount of tickets throughout the week and then at the end of the week they were allowed to [cash them in]. My son had earned so much he would like to give some of his to another kid and that was something he was super proud of, being able to help another child out. They didn't have enough tickets or just, you know, buying something for somebody else instead of using the tickets for himself. He's always been motivated or motivated by material objects, and that's just, I mean, he definitely likes them and, you know, just the object of being able to work towards something.

Common Theme Two: Space to Thrive/Choices

The second common theme identified in five of the eight interviews is space to thrive/choices. There were several instances of participants mentioning how the space to thrive or the access to autonomy through choices allowed students to be influenced by the ASCT program. The lead ASCT teacher said:

Not just a desk, but they could have different places that they could learn in, whether it be a calming cave or a safe space underneath the countertop. Creating a community within the classroom was one of the most important pieces. The students helped me set rules in the classroom, and then we talked about every rule. [We talked about] how could that be broken by somebody, as a team, to create that community piece together. It made us a tighter group as a community, as a classroom.

The lead ASCT teacher used the term “community” at least six times to describe the classroom space she attempted to create with her students in the ASCT program. Legal Guardian A described specific aspects of the space that were helpful for her child:

The way she had the classroom setup, they had little padded room. They had things that you could run and tackle and quiet spaces which basically was a bean bag under a little cubby. Then they had dedicated times they could do whatever they needed to etc. The smaller setting gave a chance for more one-on-one time and have special times to be able to relax. I feel like in that setting [it was] having the choice and knowing that he had the [ability to exhibit] responsibility and accountability.

Legal Guardian E mentioned the layout of the space ASCT provided was a positive for

her son. Transitioning from one space to another space can be a trigger for some students, especially when they are already emotionally charged. Legal Guardian E said:

They had different rooms for them to use which again was such a great thing because at his old school he was upstairs away from everything, and so trying to remove him from the classroom and take him somewhere, he would get angry and he would just refuse to move, like period. But in that setting, you know, all those rooms are right there, so if you need to move him from where he is and put him somewhere quiet or whatever, it's right there. He doesn't have to go far. That definitely benefited him because he knows, I have these resources here I can see them; I know they are there if I need them, and I really think that helps keep him calmer versus his outbursts.

Common Theme Three: Identify Needs/Skills

The third common theme is Identify Needs/Skills. This was the theme that was the most frequently referenced among all participant interviews, referenced in all eight interviews. The culture of identifying the needs and skills of students was referenced heavily by the lead ASCT teacher.

Staff's whole goal was to meet them where they are, why they were there, and if they came in dysregulated. Then the goal was, what do we need to help them to succeed to get regulated? Positive behavior supports were put in place. Everything was clearly announced and even timers were used. For example, in dealing with anxiety within all my students, which we identified what made my students anxious, and once we identified that, we learned to use different tools to help regulate our bodies to be able to manage

that anxiety. Trust was not easy to gain with any of these students, and at any moment that trust could slip in a heartbeat.

ASCT's administrator also reported instances of student needs being identified while being served by the ASCT program. "If a kid doesn't have that hunger, doesn't have that distraction of something maybe they can thrive more academically and behaviorally, so you know, that takes it back to that whole child approach."

Legal Guardian A talked about how she was able to identify her son's challenges. "He's a very anxious kid in general, and he shows anxiety through anger and excitement. He wasn't putting himself into his work and trying to learn."

The willingness to be transparent about their child's need was a common occurrence among participants. Legal Guardian B mentioned, "There was no way this kid could fit into your everyday school program classroom situation. This was a fix for him. There's no way he would have existed in the regular classroom atmosphere. This was the most traumatized, difficult kid."

A similar willingness to be vulnerable was shown by Legal Guardian C, "He did struggle with change. He was bad to chew on his shirt and stuff. He's definitely been meeting some goals since then."

In addition, Legal Guardian D mentioned her son, "At that point he was farther behind. Lots changed since then. He still does not like the bus."

Legal Guardian E talked at length about her son's different types of needs as well:

He really struggled there from third grade on, but once he went through that program and kind of got into middle school, he really just did a lot better. We were able to start tapering off his meds. He is not even enrolled in counseling. If there's a problem today

and he comes home and I talked to him about it, he knows he's going to get in trouble, and if you don't call it out right away it's going to escalate each day, each week. It's going to get worse and then it's going to be harder to break it by parent control. In that setting, the lead ASCT teacher was able to find out that he does not like reading and writing.

Legal Guardian F also displayed an awareness of her son's challenges and displayed a willingness to be vulnerable and admit some of them:

Anytime he is in a smaller setting he seems to be a lot more comfortable, especially when he has the time for like the one-on-ones and any time that he has a blow up, he knows that, in that case there was someone right there by his side to help him work through it, on a step-by-step basis. There are certain triggers she noticed that I maybe hadn't noticed at home that was flipping a switch for him. She just let me know like those little things, what they were doing to help him work around those triggers.

Common Theme Four: Confidence/Hope

The fourth common theme is Confidence/Hope. Confidence and hope were one of the most common themes throughout the interviews and was referenced in seven out of the eight interviews. The lead ASCT teacher mentioned her intentionality in wanting to focus on confidence, specifically:

We worked on social/emotional skills to help build their confidence. Confidence was a huge piece with us building in those [skills] for months, just to help them have a safe mind and body and be able to handle their self in other environments. They felt like they were failures, and they couldn't do anything and so building that confidence, self-esteem

[was important]. They started to build their confidence and so that was a great piece of it, just trying to build that confidence.

The ASCT administrator also reported the influence ASCT had on students and their ability to overcome low self-esteem:

It gave the students, for the first time, hope, the realization that they could succeed for the very first time. Some of our students had never experienced success in an academic way, and they stayed in trouble all the time. Often, they never heard anything positive about themselves, so some of it was self-esteem issues, and for the very first time we had folks that could try and work with them on impulse control, anger management, emotional regulation, and for the very first time, students could see academic success. Then they started to have hope and start to believe they can succeed not only in that avenue but in others.

Legal Guardian A mentioned how ASCT influenced her son in terms of the confidence and hope. This was a similar theme that was referenced in all but one of the legal guardian interviews:

He basically just started doing a lot better altogether the second he really started their classroom. Whenever he came home from school, he would brag about what all he did that day. He absolutely loved it. He just seemed happier with how he was in that class. It made me feel a whole lot better because they would call me and give me updates almost every day, or at least once a week if he was doing fine all day. Now since he was in there, going back to regular school, he has done a lot better. It got to a point that he would come

tell me, he did the dishes by himself, and I was very responsible about it. He was starting to actually pass his classes.

Legal Guardian B talked about the success he felt the program had with his child, “I knew things would improve drastically in that class, and they did. They did it very much so. He was happy.”

In addition, Legal Guardian D mentioned several aspects of ASCT that influenced her son’s confidence. “He loved the program. He’s doing a lot better in school. I think it was a good start to get him on the right track. He’s doing great, like he’s supposed to be. If he continues doing well he’s supposed to be going back to his regular classroom next semester.”

Furthermore, Legal Guardian E also spoke about the influence ASCT had on her son’s confidence in school:

After he got through that program not long after we were able to start taking him off his medication. So, all of that definitely helped me feel more confident in him. You’ve got someone who is more knowledgeable and trained and knows more about behavior, which I don’t know, but in my opinion, versus a regular teacher, I feel like they probably would not have the training and the knowledge that someone like the lead ASCT teacher would have because she’s more concentrated on those kinds of things. She’s right there with him all day every day. She sees a change in him. She’s able to know, to see that right away. I told her, if he had not gone through this program, we would not be where we are now. You don’t have judgement whatsoever because some people just look at you like well, you’re a terrible parent because your kid’s like this, and you didn’t get anything of that with the lead ASCT teacher. I really can’t say enough good things. I’m telling you; I

know that we would not be where we are if it wasn't for the lead ASCT teacher. I know she was made to work with these types of kids, like that is what she was made to do in this life because she's very good at it. I can see it in my son. I wish he would have been able to do it sooner because I feel like we could have progressed even sooner if we had.

In addition, Legal Guardian F also talked about how the ASCT program influenced her son in ways that improved his overall confidence and gave them hope. "He really came out a better kid because of it. Upping the bar on him a little bit. It was probably the best thing that could have happened to him. It really, really, really, really had a good outcome with my son."

Common Theme Five: Relationship

The fifth and final common theme is Relationship. The theme of relationship was commonly found throughout the interviews and was referenced in six out of the eight interviews. The lead ASCT teacher spoke at length about the importance of establishing relationships with her students:

I talked about my weaknesses. I would try to relate to my students in a way I could build that trust, so just encouraging and loving them through it all. Even if there was a meltdown, and they said I hate you, I still love you and I care about you and I want to help. In elementary school I was carried into the school as a kid, and I wanted to be able to help our students understand that, so I shared that story with them and that was very powerful for them. Creating that relationship with them was so important to provide a safe relationship, a loving relationship.

Legal Guardian A referenced the relationship her son was able to build with the lead ASCT teacher and how that influenced him. “All he wanted to do was talk about the lead ASCT teacher and all that. He just loved being in that class.”

In addition, Legal Guardian B mentioned the impression the lead ASCT teacher made on him and the relationship she created with his child:

I’m sort of stuck on the lead ASCT teacher. I’m very impressed with her. He’s got walls and you’re never crossing that wall unless he allowed you, and he allowed the lead ASCT teacher in his comfort zone. There isn’t anyone who is more dedicated than her. I’m hoping and praying the school system never loses that girl. She is an exceptional asset to the school system.

Furthermore, Legal Guardian C also talked about the relationship her child had with the lead ASCT teacher. “He loved going to see her. He loves her.”

Also, Legal Guardian D echoed a similar sentiment. “He got along with the lead ASCT teacher pretty well, yes, he liked her a lot.”

In addition, Legal Guardian E talked about the relationship she and her son have with the lead ASCT teacher:

I definitely felt better about it, not just the program, but we all love the lead ASCT teacher anyway, and so I just liked her better in general. The lead ASCT teacher is just able to have that time to really work with each child. She gets to know the children, learns their personal interests, and then she can use that to her advantage to try to help them get engaged and learn. Even a couple weeks ago, we saw her, and we just still love her. He still loves her, and he’s not like that with other teachers he’s had. I know how

much she really greatly cares for those kids; I mean, she really does. She puts everything into that program and working with every single kid.

Sub-Themes

Five sub-themes were identified as well from analysis of the data. The five sub-themes included Challenged, Supported, Safe, Healthy, and Communication. This chapter is organized by subthemes that arose with significant quotes being included.

Sub-Theme One: Challenged

Challenged was identified as a subtheme of common theme one: Engaged, which is also one of the five tenets of the whole child (ASCD, 2022). Six out of eight participants referenced how their child was challenged in the ASCT program. Sub-theme one, Challenged, addressed research sub-question number five: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be challenged? The lead ASCT teacher reported how intentional she needed to be to effectively challenge her students and keep them engaged. "So, you had to mean what you say and say what you mean; be very blunt with students. They wanted to challenge everything that you said, but if you showed up with the definition, they were okay."

Legal Guardian A mentioned, "One of the main things they were trying to teach him whenever he's in there is like responsibility and accountability and stuff like that."

Furthermore, Legal Guardian B told a similar story, "They saw to it that his work was done. The lead ASCT teacher tells you what she expects and requires."

Echoing a similar sentiment, Legal Guardian D talked about ASCT being the turning point in the quality of grades her son was bringing home. “That’s really when he started getting his grades better.”

In addition, Legal Guardian E also mentioned how the ASCT program was able to influence her son. “He’s really more challenged to try to work on the areas that he wasn’t so good in, you know, versus all the ones that he is.”

Sub-Theme Two: Supported

Supported was identified as a subtheme of common theme two: Space to Thrive/Choices. Five out of eight participants referenced how their child was supported in the ASCT program. Sub-theme two, Supported, addressed research sub-question number four: How were students supported by academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT? The lead ASCT teacher mentioned the importance of a program model that resembles ASCT. “There’s a need in every elementary school, every middle, and high for students to provide that safe space to support them. It’s a lot of the teachers being aware of what’s going to happen and knowing those triggers and how I can mitigate those triggers as we move forward throughout the day.” She went on to discuss the importance of providing different types of supports:

So, for one, the most important thing is that we were able to meet them where they were, and so it provided that place where they came to and they were supported. So, [I tried] to find ways to help support them emotionally, mentally, physically in the classroom, to be able to learn and to keep a calm mind, and so I modeled it.

The ASCT Administrator talked about the level of support that was provided as a result of the program.

There's not a better behavior manager, and I guess a mentor that I've ever met, than the lead ASCT teacher. Those kids were surrounded by not only compassion, but good people that made them feel safe. They got a lot of individual attention. From the behavior standpoint, it was almost totally negated, and they were just given a lot of individual attention. They were building their own regulation of emotions, and it was targeted almost in a one-on-one way, so that's what really enhanced the effectiveness of behavior management.

Legal Guardian A mentioned her child felt supported by the ASCT program, "They actually worked with him and instead of just throw[ing] it at him and say[ing] like, oh we taught you this the other day, you should know how to do it now. I feel like he always felt like he was able to ask questions no matter the circumstance."

In addition, Legal Guardian E talked about the support her child felt because of the ASCT program:

He was greatly supported with his learning needs. [He] felt better supported and not having to, you know, do that in front of other kids and things like that because he would get frustrated. If he didn't know how to do something, he would just get frustrated like I'm not doing it, you know, and just give up on it.

A similar sentiment was shared by Legal Guardian F about how the program supported her as a parent, "Like giving me those little extra little learning tips on how to deal with him, like if there were triggers again, like triggers that I hadn't noticed or ways to deal with those triggers on a day-to-day basis."

Sub-Theme Three: Safe

Safe was identified as a subtheme of common theme three: Identify Needs/Skills. All eight participants referenced how they and their child felt about being safe in the ASCT program. Sub-theme three, Safe, addressed research sub-question number two: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students to be safe? Participants were specifically asked if their child felt safe but also if they felt their child was safe because of the ASCT program. The lead ASCT teachers talked about how essential the need was for her to create a safe space for the students:

A safe predictable environment was very important for them and decreased their anxiety a whole lot. With the students feeling safe at school, [I] just provid[ed] that environment, communicat[ed] what's happen[ed]. [I created] a place, safe place to go to where they can meet their needs, if they need[ed] to rest, if they came in and they haven't slept and provid[ed] that environment for them. They would seek their safe place. Fear causes a lot of things, so letting them know that this is a place that's safe and it didn't matter how much I said it, you had to show it.

Furthermore, the ASCT administrator mentioned, "When we created ASCT, we created a safe, nurturing environment, where we can explore and makes the kids feel safe."

In addition, Legal Guardian E mentioned, "I feel more comfortable knowing he's with someone that can handle him better. And I'm not going to call and have to miss work again and to go pick him up because you know he has more resources available to him there."

Sub-Theme Four: Healthy

Healthy was identified as a subtheme of common theme four: Confidence/Hope. Five out of eight participants referenced how their child was influenced in terms of being healthy in the ASCT program. Sub-theme four, Health, addressed research sub-question number one: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be healthy? Health was specifically asked about and referenced in each interview and participants answers referenced the concept of psychological health, not in terms of physical health. A few of the legal guardians mentioned how their child's psychological health benefited from being in the ASCT elementary alternative program. Legal Guardian E said, "Mental health, definitely. My son didn't really have any physical health problems, so I would say there's not any change there, but mental health, definitely helped him with all of those issues."

In addition, Legal Guardian F also mentioned that her child's health benefited psychologically. "Health-wise, I feel like it just taught him better ways to deal with his emotions."

The lead ASCT teacher also mentioned her desire to focus on students feeling safe and healthy to allow students to be in a psychological state conducive for learning. The way she put it:

We have to Maslow before we Bloom. We have to meet those basic needs before these kids can learn. There is a great need for this for our students, especially going through a pandemic and dealing with what we're dealing with now. The health of my students was very important.

Sub-Theme Five: Communication

Communication was identified as a subtheme of common theme five: Relationship. Communication was referenced throughout all eight interviews. It seemed clear from responses that communication was considered extremely important to legal guardians who were served by the ASCT program. The lead ASCT teacher spoke about how communication was imperative to reduce anxiety for students and help get them to a state of mind where they are receptive to learning. “So, you know, with the students and feeling safe at school, [I was] providing that environment, communicating what’s happening.”

The ASCT administrator also talked about communication and his role to ensure the ASCT program was running effectively. “I was kind of the liaison between the lead ASCT teacher, or different folks at central office, and bus transportation, and nutrition. So, in that way, while I wasn’t hands on, that’s kind of what my role was.”

Legal Guardian A spoke about her appreciation for the level of communication she received. “I always felt like I knew what was going on. If he wanted to call me, most of the time they’d let him do it too- knowing how his work is going, how he’s doing, how he’s learning his emotions. She didn’t talk to the kids like they were kids.”

In addition, Legal Guardian B reflected a similar sentiment:

[There] was constant communication, which I love, progress reports daily, and they would tell me, let me know of his daily activity, which that was very important to me because it’s easier to praise him or hold him accountable at home based on his day because you know exactly what was going on in school.

Legal Guardian C echoed the same kind of thoughts when it came to the communication she received from the ASCT program. “She kept me up to date on pretty much everything with my son.”

Furthermore, Legal Guardian D talked about her appreciation for the introduction she got at the onset of her son attending the program. “She did a very intense introduction. It was pretty in-depth. She explained like everything, and it was awesome because she explained everything so well to me.”

A similar sentiment was shared by Legal Guardian E who also reported the influence ASCT had on her and her child in terms of communication. “You’ve got to let me know when something happens in real time. The lead ASCT teacher already understood. It wasn’t a struggle with her; she’s able to communicate more. I would very often, maybe not always daily, but at least weekly, I’m getting an update.”

In addition, Legal Guardian F mentioned a similar feeling about how the lead ASCT teacher communicated with her. “They kept you included in everything, just the day-to-day activities that were going on, and let me know everything.”

Field Notes

Data gleaned from the field notes informed the identification of common and sub-themes. I made the note that the lead ASCT teacher cares deeply for her students and understood that being vulnerable to them would promote their connection and empathy for one another, ultimately strengthening the relationship. Interviews were coded into five common and five sub-themes, field notes taken during each interview, and a document review was conducted to provide triangulation analysis for the purposed of this case study.

In the interview with the ASCT administrator notes were made that reflected the intentionality in his responses when it came to ensuring that students were first and foremost safe, fed, and properly clothed. I also noted that the ASCT administrator experienced the home lives of the students being served by ASCT as a potential source of the child's challenges instead of often being a source of support. I noted that he had low expectations for the caregivers of the students being served in the ASCT program and providing a healthy, safe environment for them to thrive seemed to be his main focus.

The field notes for the legal guardian interviews were varied and consisted of important initial thoughts and feelings I had while processing each interview. Legal Guardian A's field notes mentioned the participant seemed a little uncomfortable at first and seemed to become more comfortable as the session went on. It was noted that some of her responses were short or there was slight confusion at times and so additional questioning and rephrasing was noted as important and helpful. It was noted that her overall hope for her son was greatly influenced by the ASCT. Her son was also noted as someone who gained hope from the program from the sounds of his mother's testimony.

Anxiety was noted as a major challenge for Legal Guardian B and her child both, and it was noted that the quality of communication seemed to be an influential factor. Legal Guardian B's field notes documented a strong connection between the participant and the lead ASCT teacher. It was noted that an enormous amount of respect and admiration existed. Legal Guardian B was very candid in his answers, and it was noted that he was willing to voice displeasure with how other people have handled students with behavioral needs. It was noted that this was a foster care parent who no longer has custody of the child who was in his care at the time the student was being served by the ASCT program. Legal Guardian B admitted that he had taken in over 70

foster care children during his lifetime, and it was noted that he said this student, who attended ASCT, was the most traumatized and difficult to handle of all the other children he had cared for.

Legal Guardian C's field notes contained a note that the mother appreciated the communication she received from the program but also appreciated some of the skills her son learned, specifically teaching him how to chew on a chew device and use fidgets to help him stay calm and relaxed. It was noted that she seemed grateful to the program and gained awareness of her son's challenges because of the program.

Legal Guardian D's field notes contained a notation that the parent was very pleased with the relationship her son had built with the lead ASCT teacher and the improvements her son has made since being in the class. It was noted that she felt her son has turned around his grades because of this program. The introductory tour the lead ASCT teacher gave Legal Guardian D was noted as something that made a large impact and built initial trust. It was further noted the comfort created for Legal Guardian D because of the communication between her and the lead ASCT teacher was a positive for Legal Guardian D.

Legal Guardian E's field notes contained a note about the mother being proud of her son's growth. There was a noted sense of connection that existed between Legal Guardian E and the lead ASCT teacher. Anxiety and authority issues were noted as common themes that came up as issues for her son. The fact that her son no longer needs medication or any counseling services she claims is a direct result of the ASCT program was also noted.

Legal Guardian F's field notes contained an awareness of the triggers and challenges that were revealed because of the ASCT program. Legal Guardian F was noted as having benefited from ASCT in terms of learning aspects of her son that she hadn't considered before and was

taught effective responses to some of his triggers. It was also noted that her son also learned his own triggers and that seemed to be a turning point for his behavior and lack of anger. It was lastly noted that Legal Guardian F appreciated the increased expectations that the ASCT program helped her set for her son not just for that time, but ongoing into his future.

Document Review

There were several different documents that were considered for the purposes of this case study. Those documents included: minutes from a school board regular session on March 9th, 2019, Proposed School Board Budget Book 2020-2021, School Board Budget Revision 2021-2022, School Board Budget Book FINAL 2021-2022, and five different times ASCT was referenced in leadership meetings on March 27, 2019; May 29, 2019; November 20, 2019; September 25, 2020; and August 24, 2021. Interviews were coded into five common and five sub-themes, field notes taken during each interview, and a document review was conducted to provide triangulation analysis for the purposed of this case study.

The minutes from the March 9th, 2019, school board regular session mentioned the following about the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT.

As you know, we don't have an elementary alternative program. We plan to use part of the previous savings to start one. The idea can be summarized with the proposed name for the program – All Students Can Thrive. This program will provide opportunities for elementary principals to temporarily place students in a setting where they can focus on mental health and behavioral strategies, with outside providers, while continuing their education. The program will provide a scripted transition back to the regular setting to

ensure the student and the environment they return is able to thrive. Again, another example of providing trauma informed environments.

The Proposed Budget Book for the 2020-2021, school year mentions the development of All Student Can Thrive (ASCT) as one of the highlights mentioned in the instruction section. In the School Board Budget Book FINAL 2021-2022, the ASCT program was again mentioned as continuing to grow, under the instruction section, as one of the highlights. The 2021-2022, School Board Budget Revision lists on page 18, on line 101, ESSER III Unfinished Learning. This was allocated for \$1,073,501.16, which included the cost to run the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT in addition to a high school graduation initiative.

The division leadership meeting on March 27, 2019, referenced ASCT by stating there would be a discipline team at central office (IEP-additional staff), that ASCT would serve as a step-down service if a student was recently sent to the local crisis stabilization unit, that there would be a teacher student ratio of 1:6-8 (Grades K-5), with one aide, and a grant for a Communities in Schools worker to offer family support. The May 29, 2019, division leadership meeting consisted of a list of topics to discuss about ASCT. Those topics included Discussion, Personnel, Partnerships, Crisis Stabilization Placements, and an article from the Seattle Times referring to the increase in opioid addicted babies and the impact that has on schools.

The November 20, 2019, division leadership meeting mentioned the need to add one interventionist to the ASCT program to help support kindergarten students in the program. In the September 25, 2020, division leadership meeting, our local community service board referenced ASCT and how their crisis stabilization unit would prepare students to integrate back into public school first through the ASCT program. The August 25, 2021, division leadership meeting mentioned ASCT needed interventionists or aides to fill vacant job openings for the program.

The ASCT program was then discontinued in December of 2021, due to a lack of staff to assist the lead ASCT teacher.

Chapter Summary

This case study consisted of eight semi-structured interviews, field notes from those interviews were reviewed, and a document review was conducted to formulate the case study analysis of the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT and the influence it had on the whole child. Five common themes and five subthemes were identified because of the participant interviews. Further analysis of interviews, field notes, and document review will be discussed in Chapter 5 including a discussion on ASCT's influence on the whole child, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

Introduction

There is limited research regarding K-5 elementary alternative programs that have used student-centered learning practices, such as All Student Can Thrive (ASCT), and their effectiveness on impacting the whole child. There exists a lack of universal frameworks for consistency among K-5 elementary alternative program models. Students who are not deemed successful in the mainstream classroom because of their behavior are at a greater risk for eventually dropping out of school. This case study was designed to better understand the influence the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT had on influencing the whole child, as the whole child is defined by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Design (ASCD). The ASCD describes the whole child as healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2022).

The following research essential question and following sub-questions have guided the research and discussion on this topic and are aligned with ASCD's five tenets for educating the whole child: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2022). The essential research question in the study is: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of the K-5 elementary program ASCT influence K-5 elementary students to develop as a whole child? Research sub-questions were created to target specific elements of the whole child as well as specific aspects of student-centered learning practices. The following supporting sub-questions were explored:

1. How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be healthy?
2. How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students to be safe?
3. How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be engaged?
4. How were students supported by academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT?
5. How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be challenged?

Discussion

The findings of this case study produced five common themes and five sub-themes that emerged from interviews, field notes of the interviews, and document reviews. The common themes and sub-themes that emerged represented shared thoughts, feelings, and topics that were exhibited in the interviews, field notes, and document review, providing triangulated analysis. One common theme and four sub-themes specifically addressed each of the five research supporting sub-questions.

Common Themes

Analysis of the data identified five common themes related to the essential research question and supporting sub-questions. The common themes included Engaged, Space to Thrive/Choices, Identify Needs/Skills, Confidence/Hope, and Relationship. Common Theme

One: Engaged addressed research sub-question number three: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be engaged? Each common theme's connection to existing literature is further explored.

Common Theme One: Engaged

The first common theme identified in the data, which is also one of the five tenets of the whole child, is Engaged (ASCD, 2022). The ASCD (2022) described methods students could use to be actively engaged in learning and be associated to the school and larger community. Schools should apply active learning strategies, offering a range of opportunities for students to contribute to and learn inside the community, as well as policies and climate that reinforce citizenship and civic behaviors by staff, family members, and students. The ASCD also defined schools that engage the whole child as including curriculum-related learning opportunities that are more hands-on and experiential, such as field trips. The ASCD further discusses that for students to be actively engaged, curriculum and instruction should be combined with a wide array of options in activities that reflect each student's individual goals and learning profiles.

Curriculum and instruction should promote students' understanding of the real-world in addition to the global relevance of learned content (ASCD, 2022). According to ASCD schools developing the whole child will also have staff work closely with students to oversee and guide progress. Schools who are engaging the whole child will offer age-appropriate responsibilities through efficient decision-making, goal setting, and time management as well as responsible environmental habits such as trash management, recycling, and sustainable energy.

Legal guardian participants in the case study, along with the lead ASCT teacher, referenced students being engaged, how that looked, and what was helpful in the ASCT program

that promoted students to be engaged. For instance, Legal Guardian A mentioned, “He was actually trying more and being in that class is the only time he ever came home and told me about his day.”

The lead ASCT teacher referenced her work with birds and the excitement students had learning about and documenting different bird species. The lead ASCT teacher also touched on the token economy system that existed in the classroom and the need to specifically fill the store with personal interest items that the students were highly motivated to earn. This connects with the ASCD recommendation to combine a wide array of choices in activities that reflect the student’s individual goals and learning profiles (ASCD, 2022).

The lead ASCT teacher found out the interests of all the students in the class and always made sure the tokens they earned throughout the week could be redeemed on Fridays for items they were motivated by. If an item was not a motivator for any students, it was removed from the store. The personal interests of the students dictated what would be found in the store. The lead ASCT teacher identified that technology, Pokémon, Minecraft, and tiny figurines as the most impactful motivators in the class. Thus, adapting individual goals to reflect the interests of each student. A connection exists between the literature on students staying Engaged in learning and the practices the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT implemented. Common theme one, Engaged, effectively addressed research sub-question number three: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students’ to be engaged?

Common Theme Two: Space to Thrive/Choices

The second common theme is Space to Thrive/Choices. There were several instances of participants mentioning how the space to thrive or the access to autonomy through choices allowed students to be influenced by the ASCT program. Choice and flexibility are vital elements in why students reported the reasoning for displaying a lower frequency of disruptive behaviors in alternative settings as compared to their peers who have been served in traditional classroom settings (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Further analysis of this research allows understanding that students felt more comfortable and as confidence grew, overall academic performance and effort increased. Lange and Sletten noticed that students with higher self-esteem were more readily able to carry over their newly applied behaviors than students who exhibited more depression and somatic complaints. Smith et al. (1981) researched high student satisfaction rates and attributed these to smaller school size, flexibility, and relationships with teachers consisting of care and concern.

This literature aligns with responses from legal guardians about the influence adequate, flexible space and choices provided their children. One example, Legal Guardian A said, “They had things you [could] tackle and quiet spaces, which was a bean bag under a cubby. Then they had dedicated times when they could do whatever they needed to do.”

Legal Guardian E reported a similar response. “In that kind of setting all those rooms are right there. So, if you need to move him from where he is and put him somewhere quiet, it’s right there. I think that definitely benefitted him.” It seemed clear from participant responses that not only physical space but also autonomy and giving students options that matched their personal preferences was found to be influential for students.

Common Theme Three: Identify Needs/Skills

The third common theme is Identify Needs/Skills. Heliot et al. (2020) suggested that students should be understood, and teachers should acquire a level of awareness when it comes to the sensitivity in social learning relationships and how those directly relate to each student's being able to come to terms with their own identity. Heliot et al. findings are particularly relevant in classrooms that contain multi-cultural representation among students. Heliot et al. further suggested developing holistic, integrated views of curriculum that create opportunities for students to engage in cross-cultural and interdisciplinary activities.

Dolev and Lashem (2016) qualitatively examined emotional intelligence competencies among teachers and discovered that teachers who improved their own emotional self-awareness became more attuned to students' emotions and reported being more actively aware of emotional situations that exist within the classroom. Dolev and Lashem also found enhanced self-regard and assertiveness resulted in increased confidence when approaching parents, not giving in to students' pressures, setting high and realistic expectations, and ultimately overall better classroom management. Improvement in impulse control was also found to be beneficial in terms of avoiding hurting students' feelings and more effectively regulating their emotions.

Empathy, interpersonal relationships, and communication skills all improved when teachers increased their emotional intelligence (Dolev & Lashem 2016). Teachers, because of improvement in their emotional intelligence, increased opportunities for one-on-one time with students, provided opportunities for students to talk and listened to their concerns, showed a genuine interest in what they are doing outside of school, spoke more positively to students, engaged in dialogue more frequently instead of lectures, used open-ended questions to promote

creative thought, and focused on the strengths of each individual student. Interestingly, Dolev and Lashem found that increases in teacher emotional intelligence didn't just benefit the student.

This literature connects with the findings from interviews with participants. The lead ASCT teacher reported teaching students emotional self-awareness, while also setting high expectations, "Learning about each other's' triggers, learning about each other stresses, you had to find out every student's interests. How can I motivate them to want to do work?"

Legal Guardian E reported, "We were able to start tapering off his meds. But that was very successful and now he is not even enrolled in counseling anymore. [This program] needs to be in every school."

In addition, Legal Guardian F mentioned, "There's certain triggers that she noticed that I hadn't noticed at home that was flipping a switch for him. She just let me know those little things, what they were doing to help him work around those triggers."

Common Theme Four: Confidence/Hope

The fourth common theme is Confidence/Hope. In terms of feeling disenfranchised from the school and more likely to dropout, literature suggests that students who are at-risk are strongly impacted by a school climate of rejection from teacher, peers, or both (Natriello et al., 1990; Wehlage & Rutter, 1987; Wehlege et al., 1989). A sense of caring from school personnel will encourage students to persist in their school environment when paired with achieving academic success and will result in increased self-esteem (Arnove & Strout, 1980).

Students who have experienced higher frequencies of trauma, suffer from depression, or low self-esteem, and have struggled academically in the past could benefit from a smaller, more supportive classroom environment that allows the student to be challenged by adults who clearly establish a willingness to put their social/emotional needs at the forefront of their focus and

intentions. Alternative school programs have been identified as being successful in increasing self-esteem and overall satisfaction with the learning process when the alternative school, or mainstream classroom focuses more on the individual student, their needs, interests, and strengths, while surrounding them with a nurturing environment to be challenged (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Lange and Sletten, (2002) noticed that students with higher self-esteem were more readily able to carry over their newly applied behaviors than students who exhibited more depression and somatic complaints. When students with already low self-esteem perceive a vast difference in ability level amongst their academic peers, it can create anxiety in students making it difficult to physically sit in class, make them susceptible to bullying, cause them to act out, or disengage from the school process all together by not giving effort or simply not showing up (Bursztyn et al., 2017). It seems that some students, who are struggling emotionally with self-esteem, best feel safe, nurtured, cared about, and willing to meet high expectations when they have close intimate relationships with the adult educators in their life.

This literature connects with responses from participants in the case study. The lead ASCT teacher reported, “Confidence was a huge piece, building in those skills, that social/emotional piece, just to help them be able to handle their selves in other environments.”

The ASCT administrator reported, “The realization that they could succeed for the very first time in an academic way. It was a self-esteem issue. We could work with them on impulse control, anger management, [and] emotional regulation.”

Legal Guardian D claimed, “It did well for him, got him on the right track. He’s doing great. He’s supposed to be going back to his regular class next semester.”

In addition, Legal Guardian E reported, “Definitely helped him feel more confident.”

Furthermore, Legal Guardian F stated, “It really, really, really, really had a good outcome with my son. Helped me learn those little tricks in dealing with my son’s behavior. I hope the program continues because I see it being able to help a lot of children.”

Common Theme Five: Relationship

The fifth and final common theme is Relationship. Roorda et al. (2021) discussed the need for interventions designed specifically at decreasing the frequency of conflict in student-teacher relationships for students in ASD special education classrooms. Students in these classrooms are at-risk for more conflict with their teachers. Roorda et al. found the interventions suggested are not available currently because they do not currently exist. Roorda et al. suggested that interventions focusing on reducing conflict for students with externalizing problems be formed to and adapted to help improve relationships with students with ASD and their teachers.

Roorda et al. (2021) found students with ASD experience similar warm, close attachment with their teachers, despite the severity of their symptoms. Teachers were the ones who were found to have fluctuating levels of closeness with their students, thus researchers in this study further suggest that school personnel should provide relationship-focused interventions when teachers are having difficulty developing close relationships with certain students.

Martin and Collie (2018) examined teacher-student positive and negative relationships and the impacts those had on student school engagement and found the benefits of having more positive relationships than negative ones outweighed the limitations of having more negative relationships than positive ones. Martin and Collie suggested the number of positive relationships a student has with faculty members in the building, the more likely that student is to

be engaged in that school. Martin and Collie also suggested that positive psychology be researched as an intervention in classrooms to promote more positive relationships. Interestingly, Martin and Collie discovered that it may be particularly beneficial to focus heavily on student-teacher relationships during transitions, such as elementary to high school and the beginnings of school years.

Anyon et al. (2018) used a qualitative approach to look at discipline strategies in an urban school area and found most educators in the study reported that strong student-staff relationships created results such as profitable problem solving when faced with conflict. Anyon et al. reported school leaders specifically recognized that relationships played a vital role in the climate of the school and the frequency of discipline referrals. Educators in the study were commonly reporting the significance of familial involvement and discovered that engaging with parents, family meetings, positive phone calls, and keeping families informed about what is going on in the school all were mentioned as being the most influential.

The literature on the student-teacher relationship directly connects to responses from each legal guardian participants, except one, in the case study on the quality of relationship that existed between the lead ASCT teacher and individual students who were served by the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT. The lead ASCT teacher mentioned, “I do care about you, and I care about your families during COVID. I wanted to continue to keep that relationship.”

Legal Guardian A said, “All he wanted to do was talk about the lead ASCT teacher and that he loved being in that class.”

In addition, Legal Guardian B reported, “I’m sort of stuck on the lead ASCT teacher. I’m very impressed.”

Furthermore, Legal Guardian C reported, “He loved going to the lead ASCT teacher. She definitely loves him, and she talks about him. She’s just got a heart of gold.”

In addition, Legal Guardian D said, “He liked her a lot.”

Also, Legal Guardian E reported, “She gets to know the children, learns their personal interests, and then she uses that to her advantage to try to help them get engaged and learn. [My son] still loves the lead ASCT teacher and he’s not like that with a lot of teachers he’s had. We love [her].”

Sub-Themes

Five sub-themes were identified as well from analysis of the data. The five sub-themes included Challenged, Supported, Safe, Healthy, and Communication. Sub-Theme One: Challenged addressed research sub-question five, Sub-Theme Two: Supported addressed research sub-question four, Sub-Theme Three: Safe addressed research sub-question two, and Sub-Theme Four: Healthy addressed research sub-question one. This chapter is organized by sub-themes and their connections to existing literature.

Sub-Theme One: Challenged

Challenged was identified as a sub-theme of common theme one: Engaged and Challenged is also one of the five tenets of the whole child (ASCD, 2022). The ASCD (2022) says each student should be challenged academically and prepared for success in future endeavors by first having access to challenging and comprehensive curriculum, instruction, and assessments in each content area. Curriculum and instruction should provide opportunities for students to master technology proficiency and practice reasoning skills, critical-thinking, and problem-solving. Every school should use both qualitative and quantitative information to

determine a student's academic and personal growth as well as to establish goals for the future. The ASCD emphasizes that each school should work with families to ensure all students know the connection between education and lifelong success.

The ASCD (2022) also stated that to challenge the whole child, schools should incorporate evidence-based practices into curriculum and instruction to prepare students for citizenship, education, and careers. Importantly, schools should provide, monitor, and assess growth in extracurricular, co-curricular, and community-based programs which challenge students to experience situations that will mirror those as a citizen, in higher education, or in their career. The ASCD also advocates for students to be challenged to develop a global awareness and be competent in understanding other cultures. Finally, the ASCD stated that students should be provided challenging opportunities to learn technology through cross-curricular practices.

This literature from the ASCD aligns with responses from participants in the case study. The lead ASCT teacher said, "We used visual schedules to show the students what was expected for the day. I don't care what order you're doing it in, but these are some things we need to try and finish today."

Legal Guardian A reported, "One of the main things they were trying to teach him was responsibility and accountability, and the way it influenced him was just to try."

In addition, Legal Guardian B said, "To be challenged by schoolwork was a motivator for him. The lead ASCT teacher tells you what she expects and requires."

Furthermore, Legal Guardian E mentioned, "He's more challenged to try to work on the areas that he wasn't so good in, versus all the ones he is." Sub-theme one, Challenged,

successfully addressed research sub-question number five: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students' to be challenged?

Sub-Theme Two: Supported

Supported was identified as a sub-theme of common theme two: Space to Thrive/Choices. The ASCD (2022) recommended that all each student should have access to personalized learning and be supported by qualified, caring educators. In addition, learning should be personalized including having flexible time to meet academic and social goals, and teachers should use a range of assessments to monitor student progress, provide quick feedback, and adjust lessons to maximize progress. The ASCD also stated that students are supported when schools ensure that student-adult relationships are always promoting academic and personal growth for the student.

The ASCD (2022) clearly stated that students should have counselors and other emotional support personnel who are available to help students whenever a need may arise. Also, school personnel should be welcoming and inclusive to all students and families. The ASCD expects schools to use multiple methods of communication to ensure all stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds clearly understand the school's vision, mission, goals, activities, and opportunities for students. For families to be supported, the ASCD requires schools to facilitate families' understanding of what community and school-based resources their children can benefit from. Another component of ensuring the whole child is supported is having every member of the school staff properly trained and licensed. All staff should model prosocial behavior on a consistent basis.

The literature on children being supported aligns with the responses reported by participants of this case study. The lead ASCT teacher reported, “Support the student in staying safe and healthy. The teacher being very aware of what’s going to happen and knowing how to mitigate those triggers throughout the day. We had a full-time aide and had a counselor in the room. One of the most important things was we met them where they were.”

The ASCT administrator mentioned, “They got a lot of individual attention. Building their own self-regulation of emotions was targeted in a one-on-one way. That’s what really enhanced the effectiveness of behavior management.”

Legal Guardian A reported, “They actually worked with him. Instead of just throwing it at him, he felt like he could always ask a question no matter the circumstances.”

In addition, Legal Guardian B said, “He didn’t need homework help because they took care [of it]. They supported everything, always there for me.”

Furthermore, Legal Guardian C mentioned, “It did support my son’s learning needs. [The lead ASCT teacher] always made me feel like I could come to her. If I had any questions she would break stuff down for me.”

Also, Legal Guardian E reported, “He felt better supported. He had more resources available.”

In addition, Legal Guardian F said, “Class was hands on with him as well as with the parent. They were definitely helping him dealing with his emotions. Gave me extra little learning tips how to deal with his triggers that I hadn’t noticed or ways to deal with those triggers just on a day-to-day basis.” Sub-theme two, Supported, successfully addressed research sub-question

number four: How were students supported by academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT?

Sub-Theme Three: Safe

Safe was identified as a sub-theme of common theme three: Identify Needs/Skills. The ASCD (2022) stated that students learn best when in an environment that is emotionally and physically safe. This includes the building, grounds, playground equipment, as well as transportation vehicles, all meeting safety and environmental standards that have been established. The ASCD states that schools should be attractive, have good traffic flow, including for those with special needs, and structurally sound.

The ASCD (2022) also stated that physical, emotional, academic, and social climates should all be student-centered, friendly, and safe. The ASCD further states that all students should feel valued, respected, cared for, and motivated to learn. Staff, students, and family members are involved in the establishment and maintenance of classroom behavioral expectations, rules, and routines to improve any problematic behavior.

The ASCD (2022) also determines a safe education environment through teaching and modeling healthy emotions and providing opportunities to practice social/emotional learning. The ASCD states that schools should uphold social justice and equity in addition to ensuring that climate, curriculum, and instruction all reflect high student expectations. Finally, the ASCD states that academic and behavioral interventions should always be based on the understanding of the child's developmental and learning ability.

The literature on student safety from the ASCD connects with the responses from participants who were interviewed for the purposes of this case study. For instance, the lead

ASCT teacher mentioned, “A safe predictable environment that they knew through routine and schedule what was coming up next.”

The ASCT administrator said, “We created a safe, nurturing environment, where we could explore and make the kids feel safe.”

Legal Guardian B stated, “I think he totally understood that this was the safest place for him. This was a foster child.” Sub-theme three, Safe, effectively addressed research sub-question number two: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students to be safe?

Sub-Theme Four: Healthy

Healthy was identified as a sub-theme of common theme four: Confidence/Hope. “Healthy” is described as a school culture that supports and reinforces the health and well-being of each student through a student health education curriculum and instructional support. Each student’s health and well-being are reinforced by addressing the physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of each child’s health (ASCD, 2022).

A school’s physical education schedule, curriculum, and instructional support should reinforce the health and well-being of each student by focusing on lifelong fitness knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills (ASCD, 2022). According to the ASCD staff member health and well-being should be supported as well. Health is also facilitated by collaboration with parents and local community partners as well as by integrating health and well-being into professional development, curriculum, and assessment practices. Realistic goals for student and staff health must be based on valid data and sound science. The ASCD says students and staff members

should have access to health, mental health, and dental services. Finally, the ASCD says student health can be promoted by educating students on healthy eating patterns.

The literature of students being healthy in school aligns with responses from participants who participated in the case study. The lead ASCT teacher said, “The health of my students was very important.”

Legal Guardian E reported, “Mental health, definitely helped him with those issue.”

In addition, Legal Guardian F said, “Health wise, it taught him better ways to deal with his emotions.” Sub-theme four, Health, successfully addressed research sub-question number one: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of ASCT influence students’ to be healthy?

Sub-Theme Five: Communication

Communication was identified as a sub-theme of common theme five: Relationship. Volungis and Goodman (2017) studied school violence in the United States and discussed and assessed how teacher-student relationship skills, teacher-student communication skills, and multicultural competence among teachers can help prevent adolescent school violence. Volungis and Goodman formulated a theoretical model describing the elements of teacher-student relationship skills, teacher-student communication skills, and multicultural competence to achieve prevention of school violence. Teacher-student relationship skills were broken down into showing empathy, non-judgmental interaction, and demonstrating dignity and respect, each important in forming a strong teacher-student alliance.

Volungis and Goodman (2017) described that teacher-student communication skills which promote trust at a collective level include attending and listening, open ended questions,

reflection and validation, reframing, paraphrasing, challenging, self-disclosure, and summarizing. The ASCD expects schools to use multiple methods of communication to ensure all stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds clearly understand the school's vision, mission, goals, activities, and opportunities for students (ASCD, 2022). Empathy, interpersonal relationships, and communication skills all improved when teachers increased their emotional intelligence (Dolev & Lashem 2016).

The literature on communication connects with the responses from participants in this case study. The lead ASCT teacher said, "The student felt safe at school, [we] provided that environment, communicat[ed] what [was] happening."

The ASCT administrator mentioned, "I was kind of the liaison between the lead ASCT teacher and folks at central office, bus transportation, and nutrition."

Legal Guardian A reported, "I always felt like I knew what was going on. She didn't talk to the kids like they were kids."

In addition, Legal Guardian B said, "Was constant communication, progress reports daily, which I love. They would tell me his daily activity."

Also, Legal Guardian C reported, "She kept me up to date with pretty much everything with my son."

In addition, Legal Guardian D said, "She did a very intense introduction, pretty in depth. She explained everything and it was awesome."

Furthermore, Legal Guardian E reported, "I would maybe not daily, but at least weekly get an update. With him that communication is very important."

In addition, Legal Guardian F stated, “They kept you included in everything, just the day-to-day activities that were going on.”

Field Notes

Data gleaned from the field notes informed the identification of common and sub-themes. I made the note that the lead ASCT teacher cares deeply for her students and understood that being vulnerable to them would promote their connection and empathy for one another, ultimately strengthening the relationship. Interviews coded into five common themes: Engaged, Space to Thrive/Choice, Identify Needs/Skills, Confidence/Hope, and Relationship, and five sub-themes: Challenged, Supported, Safe, Healthy, and Communication.

Field notes aligned with literature and participant responses, in terms of how the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT influenced the whole child. Field notes corroborated that each student whose legal guardian participated in the case study was educated in a way that addressed the whole child as a result of being served by the ASCT program. Interview responses, field notes taken during each interview, and a document review provided triangulation analysis for the purposed of this case study.

Document Review

There were several different documents that were considered for the purposes of this case study. Those documents included: minutes from a school board regular session on March 9th, 2019, Proposed School Board Budget Book 2020-2021, School Board Budget Revision 2021-2022, School Board Budget Book FINAL 2021-2022, and five different times ASCT was referenced in leadership meetings on March 27, 2019; May 29, 2019; November 20, 2019; September 25, 2020; and August 24, 2021. Interviews were coded into five common and five

sub-themes, field notes taken during each interview, and a document review was conducted to provide triangulation analysis for the purposed of this case study.

The document review aligned with literature, participant responses, and field notes, in terms of how the K-5 elementary alterative program ASCT influenced the whole child. The document review corroborated that each student whose legal guardian participated in the case study was educated in a way that addressed the whole child as a result of being served by the ASCT program. Interview responses, field notes taken during each interview, and a document review provided triangulation analysis for the purposed of this case study.

Implications for Practice

After analysis of interviews from three different types of participants, a review of field notes taken during the interviews, and a document review, it was found that all five tenets of the whole child were found to be either a common theme or sub-theme in participant responses from interview questions and five addition themes emerged totally 10 total themes. Interview questions specifically asked whether legal guardians felt their students were healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged to better understand the influence the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT had on the whole child.

The ASCT program existed a short time but appears to have had a positive influence on students. Some of the students served by the ASCT program were forced to transition back to their mainstream classroom at the end of the December 2021 semester because the ASCT program was not able to be sustained due to a lack of available staff. The implications for this is understanding the level of importance in being able to provide the appropriate number of quality of staff for a program model like this to be successful.

Answering the essential research question: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of the K-5 elementary program ASCT influence K-5 elementary students to develop as a whole child, this case study found 10 components of the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT did influence the whole child. All five tenets of the whole child (Healthy), (Safe), (Engaged), (Supported), and (Challenged) in addition to five other themes (Space to Thrive/Choices), (Identify Needs/Skills), (Confidence/Hope), (Communication), and (Relationship) emerged from triangulated analysis of the data.

It appears from triangulation of the data that the K-5 elementary alternative program All Students Can Thrive (ASCT) influenced the whole child. Implications for practice include establishing K-5 elementary alternative programs in public, private, and charter school settings that focus on implementing student-centered learning practices that reflect all 10 themes that emerged to influence the whole child. According to the ASCD (2022) and the findings of this case study, for program models like ASCT to be successful in influencing the whole child, programs must have:

- Adequate space & staff (Supported), (Confidence/Hope), (Safe), & (Space to Thrive/Choices)
- Access to activities that promote lifelong fitness knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills- (Confidence/Hope) & (Healthy)
- Access to mental health resources – (Supported), (Identify Needs/Skills), (Confidence/Hope), & (Safe)

- Flexible curriculum & individualized goals adapted to learning profiles – (Space to Thrive/Choice), (Identify Needs/Skills), (Supported), (Challenged), (Confidence/Hope), & (Engaged)
- Access to build trusting relationships with adult teachers – (Relationship), (Safe), (Communication), (Space to Thrive/Choices), & (Confidence/Hope)
- Opportunities to boost confidence and hope – (Space to Thrive/Choices), (Identify Needs/Skills), & (Confidence/Hope)
- Quality communication between all stakeholders – (Communication), (Confidence/Hope), & (Relationship)

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research include a quantitative study measuring the influence a K-5 elementary alternative program that integrates student-centered learning practices has on the whole child by looking at the frequency of discipline referrals, absences, and grades of the student before and after being served by the K-5 elementary alternative program. Also, a longitudinal study tracking discipline referral, attendance, and the academic success rate of students before and after being exposed to a K-5 elementary alternative program that integrate student-centered learning practices could help us understand the long-lasting impacts of having the opportunity to have access to a program model that resembles ASCT.

A study that would provide additional insight to this research would be a qualitative study that reports the perspective of a mainstream classroom teacher before and after they have a student who is removed from their classroom due to disruptive behaviors, is served by a K-5 elementary alternative program that integrates student-centered learning practices, and then the

student is placed back into the same mainstream classroom with the same mainstream classroom teacher. This type of study could provide rich insight into how teachers' perceptions of their students can potentially change over time.

Confidence/Hope emerged as a theme that connected with every recommendation for practice. Therefore, research measuring the difference in Hope Scores between students in mainstream classrooms and student in K-5 elementary alternative programs would provide helpful insight (Beachboard, 2022). Further, measuring the change in student Hope Scores over time before and after being exposed to a K-5 elementary alternative program, like ASCT, that integrates student-centered learning practices would provide important insight into how much a student's Hope Score is impacted by the K-5 elementary alternative program. This could provide insight into exactly when the student's confidence/hope has increased, making it much more likely that educators can be aware of when students are capable of integrating their new learned behavior strategies into their original mainstream classroom.

Chapter Summary

The results of the data analysis revealed that the K-5 elementary alternative program All Students Can Thrive (ASCT) influenced the whole child (ASCD, 2022). All five tenets of the whole child were represented in participants' responses as either common themes or sub-themes. Participants provided varying yet similar responses that answered the essential research question: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of the K-5 elementary program ASCT influence the whole child? As well as answering the five supporting sub-questions.

Answering the essential research question: How did academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and self-regulatory components of the K-5 elementary program ASCT influence K-5 elementary students to develop as a whole child, this case study found 10 components of the K-5 elementary alternative program ASCT influenced the whole child. The results revealed that that all five tenets of the whole child were identified as a common theme or sub-theme from participant responses. Five common themes: (1) Engaged (2) Space to Thrive/Choices (3) Identify Needs/Skills (4) Confidence/Hope (5) Relationship and five sub-themes: (1) Challenged (2) Supported (3) Safe (4) Healthy (5) Communication emerged from the analysis of data. Theme and sub-theme coded interview responses, field notes taken during each interview, and a document review provided triangulated analysis that confirmed that the K-5 elementary alternative program (ASCT) did in fact influence the whole child as defined by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Design (ASCD).

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APPENDIX: Participant Interview Questions

Legal Guardian Interview Questions

1. How do you feel placement in Miss Katie's class influenced your child's school experience in terms of health?
2. Talk about how placement in Miss Katie's class influenced your child's feelings about being safe at school?
3. How did placement in Miss Katie's class influence your feelings about your child being safe at school?
4. Talk about how your child's ability to stay on task was influenced by being placed in Miss Katie's class.
5. Describe how Miss Katie's class did or did not support your child's learning needs.
6. Talk about how Miss Katie's class supported you.
7. Talk about how placement in Miss Katie's class influenced your child's ability to be challenged by their schoolwork?
8. How do you feel placement in Miss Katie's class influenced your child?
9. How do you feel placement in Miss Katie's class influenced you?

Lead Teacher & Administrator Interview Questions

1. How do you feel placement in the K-5 Elementary Alternative Program influenced student school experience in terms of health?
2. Talk about how placement in the K-5 Elementary Alternative Program influenced student feelings about being safe at school?
3. How did placement in the K-5 Elementary Alternative Program influence your feelings about students being safe at school?
4. Talk about how students' abilities to stay on task was influenced by being placed in the K-5 Elementary Alternative Program.
5. Describe how the K-5 Elementary Alternative Program did or did not support student learning needs.
6. Talk about how the K-5 Elementary Alternative Program was staffed and supported by the central office.
7. Talk about how placement in the K-5 Elementary Alternative Program influenced students' abilities to be challenged by their schoolwork?
8. How do you feel placement in the K-5 Elementary Alternative Program influenced students?
9. How do you feel your role in the K-5 Elementary Alternative Program influenced students?

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